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AUTOBIOGRAPHY

OF AN

ENGLISH DETECTIVE

BY "WATERS"

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I



LONDON

JOHN MAXWELL AND COMPANY

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Autobiography of an English Detective.

A DETECTIVE IN THE BUD.

IT may sound strangely, but is not the less true, that I joined the Metropolitan Detective Police Force—only the name of which is modern, the vocation itself being as old as corrupt, civilized and uncivilized humanity—before I had quite attained the ripe age of sixteen. My stepfather, at that time a well-known Bow-street officer—Bow-street Runner was the more common appellation—a stern, iron-willed, but just man, believed implicitly in the wisdom of Solomon, especially in the part thereof which teaches that to spare the rod is to spoil the child. He exemplified the sincerity of his faith by vigorous practice, and never more strikingly so than shortly before my sixteenth

birthday, when it became necessary to peremptorily decide upon the groove into which, as we would now say, I should be shunted to make the journey of life. I myself had a strong predilection for the sea, and advanced reasons eminently satisfactory to myself why I should be at once bound 'prentice to Andrew Giles, skipper of a Newcastle collier trading between that port and the Thames, and a distant relative of my mother, long before that departed. My stepfather's views entirely differed from mine; I was more fitted to be a sweep than a sailor; but having noticed certain peculiarities of mine—indications of a character which in itself was not worthy of commendation, but might be turned to useful account in the business of life—he had determined upon training me in the way I should go, whether I liked it or not, which way was the career of a Bow-street Detective Officer, his own profession.

The proposal disgusted me. I told him so. Whereupon he at once had recourse to his favourite argument—the cane. Less than one week's daily drill in that exercise more than sufficed to convince

me that he was right, I wrong; and with the consent of Sir Richard Burnie, I was given what may be called a cadet's commission in the celebrated corps of Bow-street "Runners," the pay to commence with twenty pounds per annum.

The year was 1819—that of the Peterloo Manchester Massacre, as the charge of the valiant yeomanry upon Orator Hunt's unarmed half-starved ragamuffins was termed by irreverent scribblers and spouters in Parliament and the press. Sir Francis Burdett, Baronet, "Westminster's Pride and England's Glory" (abbreviated by William Cobbett, that sledge-hammer assailant of all rival celebrities, into "Sir Glory") as his admirers called him—wrote his once celebrated, long since forgotten letter upon that occasion;—winged words of burning eloquence, which kindled in me—silly, excitable mooncalf—and in thousands of others, a fiery indignation against the Sidmouth-Castlereagh Ministry, and, a much more serious matter, consigned Westminster's Pride and England's Glory to the Tower, by order of the Honourable the House of Commons, upon whom and

by whom the letter was declared to be a scandalous libel. Sir Francis refusing to surrender, was captured by force, and conveyed, escorted by the Life Guards, to the Tower. The people resisted; a gunsmith's shop on Snow-hill was broken into, pillaged, and enough was done in the way of puny revolt to legally justify the soldiers in firing upon the infuriated mob. Two or three persons were killed, more wounded, and the incidents of the day furnished employment for many weeks afterwards to the Bow-street Detective Police, in the endeavour to hunt down a number of ringleaders in the riot, for whose apprehension large rewards were offered by the Government. Amongst these was John Watson, upon whose track, he happening to be personally known to me, I, with others, was hounded on; a mission most repugnant to my feelings, for I greatly respected, I may say loved, the fugitive—an element of the case unguessed at by my father.

This was my first essay in the Detective line of business. Forty-four years have passed away since then — crowded years, full of adventure,

peril, excitement—more especially since the two Forresters retired from active service, and I, with others, entered upon their peculiar functions, which chiefly consisted in tracking fugitives from justice on the Continent of Europe, in the United States, Canada, Australia, &c. Curious enough, my last detective exploit resembled my first in this, that it was a hunt after a man named Watson—Richard, however, not John Watson—who led me a pretty dance, concluded at the Mauritius, and at the same time finishing me for ever as a Detective.

Returned to England a helpless cripple—so far as active bodily exertion is concerned, a few months since superannuated upon a fairly-liberal pension—it has occurred to me that I might improve my income, and at the same time amuse, if not instruct, that portion of the public who prefer facts, to fiction however airily tricked out, by transcribing from the tablet of memory the most striking of the scenes which gleam through the dimming mists of those four-and-forty years, commencing with the chase after John Watson the

Radical rebel, ending with the pursuit of Richard Watson the fraudulent stock-broker. These ought to make an entertaining book ; and will, if I can only find the true trick of writing it.

I have remarked that John Watson was personally known to and much liked by me, and that my stepfather knew nothing of the latter circumstance. My acquaintance with Watson commenced in a singular manner. My mother—a weak-spirited, gentle creature, in marrying a second time, when I was in my third year, had given herself a master as well as husband. I doubt that she was ever violently attached to him. Well, I have *no* doubt whatever upon the subject, though her sad, solemn eyes, full of yearning love for *me*, closed upon the world when I was but eight years of age. I also know she was as true a wife as loving mother. There was a brother of hers—Robert Smith, suppose we call him—a wild, reckless man, who having wasted in early life the means, both material and moral, which might have enabled him to attain a respect-

able social position, had gradually sunk into the lowest depths of degradation. My stepfather, in the first blush of his marriage (he must have loved his wife had he been composed throughout of hardest flint), made several efforts to reclaim, to save him. Irritated, angered by the failure of his well-meant efforts, he not only himself whistled off the irreclaimable vagabond, but sternly commanded my mother to do the same. She was forbidden to hold the slightest intercourse with him, and enjoined, should he persist in coming to the house, pestering her for the loan of small sums of money, as he had been in the habit of doing, to at once give him into custody. The ties of blood, intertwined, knotted in childhood, are difficult, in some natures, impossible to break. My mother *could* not break so entirely with Robert Smith as her husband wished; but she scrupulously avoided assisting the ne'er-do-well at that husband's cost. Some of her relatives, Lancashire folk, were in fair circumstances, and to them she appealed for at least sufficient money to help to save the miserable castaway from absolute starvation—

possibly from suicide. That help was afforded; but what could such doles avail in satisfying the cravings of a confirmed drunkard? Smith grew more and more importunate, for ever threatening to hang or drown himself; and at length so worked upon his sister's feelings that she consented to see him personally, as soon as it should be dark (the month was November), in Copenhagen Fields—a locality named by himself.

I was then about eight years of age, and my mother took me with her. She usually wore a rather costly gold watch and chain—a present of my stepfather's on the wedding-day. In her flurry at setting out to keep the clandestine appointment very reluctantly made, she forgot to put off those trinkets; an oversight which might have had disastrous consequences.

The night fell dark, gusty, and a chilling, drizzly rain set in before we reached the place of meeting—then one of the dreariest spots in London. Smith, more than half-drunk, was waiting for us with savage impatience—we being considerably behind the time agreed upon. His sister had

but a half-guinea for him; he clutched it with a snappish growl at the smallness of the gift, then asked if his sister could suppose that such a sum could afford him real relief; help him to leave this cursed country for America, as his last letter informed her he intended doing; or, should he find it "impossible to carry out that purpose, take his departure, without further shilly-shallying, and by swifter conveyance, to another place—that place, hell!—hell! One may be pretty sure of that, eh Madam Piety? And you—you," he added, with gathering ferocity, "you, my sister, who could, who can save me from destruction, will not! I want but ten guineas—only ten guineas—possessed of which, I will leave England for ever before the week is out!"

Smith's melodramatic mouthing did not even impose upon me, child as I was; but I noticed with a vague feeling of uneasiness (the moon was just then shedding a pale, uncertain light through a rift in the dense night-clouds) that his blood-shot, greedy eyes were fixed upon the watch and chain. My mother, observing that she could as

easily give him one hundred guineas as ten, turned away, with a gesture of impatient disgust. As she did so, the brother, maddened with drink and disappointment, made a fierce snatch at the watch. To have permitted herself to be despoiled of it by Smith would have entailed her husband's lasting displeasure, and she screamed loudly, struggled desperately to retain it. I helped her by kicking the drunken ruffian's legs, biting his hands with all the strength I could bring to the rescue. Smith, who must have been a very powerful man before the Delilah of drink had shorn him of a great portion of his strength, would no doubt have finally prevailed had not effectual help come, and not one moment too soon. Smith was struck to the ground by the blow of a brawny fist, and the glittering prize of which he deemed himself secure was wrested from his grasp. The person who arrived so opportunely to our aid was Mr. John Watson, who, it subsequently appeared, was acquainted, in consequence, I suppose, of similarity of political crotchets, with Smith. A hurried, passionate explanation followed the

defeated felonious attempt of Smith, and first administering a stern warning, Mr. Watson allowed him to depart. Mr. Watson accompanied us for the greater part of our way homeward, conversing earnestly the while with my mother concerning Robert Smith, in whom, for some reason or other, he evidently felt a deep interest. Confidential communications between my mother and Watson, of which I was the medium, took place during the next five or six weeks ; and the gratifying result was that Robert Smith was enabled to leave his country for his country's good, with a fair prospect of mending his ragged fortunes in one of the newly-settled Western States of America. I often afterwards casually met and exchanged friendly greetings with Watson, and never for one moment forgot that my mother, to her dying day, felt for him both esteem and gratitude.

It was this man whose lurking-place the Government of the day was so anxious to discover. Once unearthed, caught in the iron grip of the Bow-street Runners, Watson would be as surely

hanged as that all of us must one day meet Death in that or some other form. And this was to be the first essay of my 'prentice hand in the repulsive vocation which I had been scourged into embracing, was it? I was to do my best, poor as that best might be, to bring to the gallows one of the very few persons who had ever done a real kindness to me or mine. I might perhaps have felt bound to do such violence to my young, fresh sense of honour and humanity if, instead of having been brutally coerced, I had volunteered into the service. But that not being the case, we should see that which we should see.

The chase was hot and close after poor Watson. It was soon pretty certain that he was concealed somewhere in London, but to make assurance doubly sure, not a vessel could be cleared from a British port till it had been ransacked from stem to stern, in search of the fugitive. Not one of the hunters was more eager, more vigilant than myself. My acquaintance with Watson, comparatively slight as it had been, gave me peculiar

facilities which I turned to such good account that but a few days passed before I knew that Watson, *alias* Kirby, was concealed at No. 46, John-street, Clerkenwell. I had been aware of that fact two or three days when a note written in a disguised hand by a partially trusted traitor was received by our chief officer, stating that Watson was to be found in John-street, Clerkenwell. The number of the house, the writer thought, was 73 or 93; but if mistaken in that respect the right number would be certainly forwarded before many hours, perhaps one hour, had passed, by "Thomas Jebb, a needy but loyal subject of his Majesty King George."

The letter, which reached the office about noon, having been read and a consultation held thereon, it was determined, till the exact information promised came to hand, to merely watch Nos. 73 and 93, John-street, and not run the risk of warning the quarry that the hunters had struck the true trail, and would soon pounce upon their prey if speedy flight were not resorted to.

My mind—the mind of a rash, foolish, most

imprudent boy — was instantly made up, and off I started for 46, John-street, rung the side-bell, told the scared serving-wench who opened the door that I must see Mr. Kirby at once, bolted past her without waiting for an answer, ran up to the first floor three steps at a time, and the next minute was face to face with John Watson, who sprung up from his chair with panic alarm, let fall his pipe and seized the poker. He was tolerably disguised by means of a flaxen wig, but would scarcely pass undetected by any one who knew and was looking for him.

“You, Clarke!” he exclaimed, with quivering voice, and a sternly reproachful glance. “You—”

“Yes, me,” I broke in; “me, Henry Clarke, who is here, and not one moment too soon, to save you if possible from the officers whose net is fast closing round you, Mr. Watson. You must leave this immediately, and as much better disguised than you are now as we can manage in the few minutes we have to spare.”

Watson was a man of nerve, but so imminent and deadly a peril deprived him for the moment of

all presence of mind. He trembled violently, and was so completely helpless that the additional disguise required, I was compelled to invent and adjust myself.

That done tolerably to my satisfaction, I urged him to secure any money or papers he might have, of importance. He did so with my help. I was pleased to find that he felt not the slightest distrust of me. It was not likely that he would. The tones of simple honesty and truth are rarely misinterpreted.

“Now, my good sir, follow the guidance of a boy, and boldly. We must let ourselves out one at a time, myself keeping a few paces ahead. The servant girl, I am sure, does not know who I am, and I took the precaution to prevent her obtaining more than a very slight glance at my phiz. Come along, Mr. Watson, my mother’s friend. There is no fear.”

No fear! The chances were in favour of both of us being caught as we left the house, in which case, as I soon afterwards bethought me with a shudder, I could only have saved myself from the capital

charge of misprision of treason by the pretence, which, with Watson's connivance, would hardly have passed, that I had by the prowess of my boy-arm arrested Watson, and was holding him in custody. In fact, I subsequently ascertained that three officers despatched to John-street soon after I left Bow-street office must have passed No. 46 but a few minutes before Watson and I quitted it.

My next move was yet more rash and audacious, but yet not without a spice of cleverness by force of its very rashness and audacity. At that hour of the day there would not be a soul at home in the house where I and my stepfather lodged, and there was a bedroom rarely used in which I determined to secrete Watson till some final scheme of escape could be devised. The fugitive himself was startled when he found where he was to be temporarily stowed away. A few moments' reflection quieted his fears. Surely the very last place in which the officers would expect to find Watson would be the domicile of one of themselves!

One element of danger had been overlooked,

was indeed unsuspected by me. Watson had caught a cold, could not for the life of him avoid coughing violently now and then, and my father's bedroom was only divided from his by a thin wooden partition. This awful fix suddenly making itself known to me as, very late in the evening, I returned home with provisions for my *protégé*, positively threw me into a bath of cold perspiration. Why, Good Heavens! my father's step might at any moment be heard on the stairs; in which case our terrible wager, life against death, would be lost to all intents and purposes. A council of despair, or at least one approaching to that colour, resulted in the pleasant conclusion that nothing better at that time of night could be done than the procurement of a plentiful supply of cough lozenges. This was done, we bade each other an apprehensive farewell, and nervously thought of the morrow.

It seemed almost a special Providence that my stepfather did not return home that night. The informer upon Watson had written again, giving the correct number of the house, No. 46, John-

street ; but too late,—the bird had flown. It had suddenly crossed my mind when we left the place, seeing the serving wench listening and cock-watching out of a partially opened door, to say in an affected whisper, quite loud enough to be heard, “If we can only get safe to Deal or Ramsgate, the trick is done” Very lucky that thought did cross my mind, as the girl, bullied and bribed into telling all she knew, and probably something more, repeated what I said, and, of course, to exalt her own wonderful acuteness of ear, dwelt upon the cautious, whispering way in which it was said. Presto! Officers, my stepfather amongst them, set off, post-haste for Deal and Ramsgate, and did not return till full forty-eight hours afterwards. Before that time expired, we (Watson and Company) had made a new, and to the adversary we flattered ourselves, rather perplexing move in the game.

The night passed in fear and trembling. I—first locking up poor hunted Watson in a narrow coal-cupboard—hastened to Bow-street, where I learnt the foregoing particulars. Gratefully recog-

nising the beneficent Providence which had so far steered our frail bark in safety through sinuous shoals and quicksands, I, nevertheless, being instinctively a believer in the soundness of the axiom that "Heaven helps those who help themselves," cast about with eager solicitude to discover some particular mode of achieving permanent success. My pride, of which I had a Luciferian share, was aroused. It was a duel—nothing less—between me and the famous Bow-street runners. Should I succeed—should I baffle those trained sleuth-hounds—it would prove, at all events, that my astute stepfather had rightly divined the peculiar bent of my genius.

The dodge to which John Watson owed his ultimate safety has always been attributed to his own vulpine cunning—to his own calculated audacity. He himself so gave it out at a meeting in New York. That was not true. Either he was misreported or he misrepresented the facts of the case, which were these:—

The next house to the Bow-street Police-office was occupied by a tailor of the name of Savill.

He appeared to have a quiet sort of family trade, and the upper part of his house was let off in "Furnished Apartments for Single Gentlemen." I did not remember to have ever seen his front window divested of that announcement; but the familiar formula had never spoken suggestively to me till three or four hours after I had left poor Watson locked up in the coal-cupboard. "Furnished Apartments for Single Gentlemen" in immediate proximity to the renowned police-office. The words seemed to read themselves to me, as my eyes rested half-vacantly upon them, with a knavish chuckle, and slightly altered—"A Furnished Apartment for *a* Single Gentleman!"

To be sure, the very thing for William Stubbs, *alias* Richard Kirby, *alias* John Watson. No man with his wits about him would, if he happened to be particularly "wanted" in Bow-street, walk of his own accord to Bow-street, and take up his abode under the very noses of the men in quest of him! Certainly not. It were an unimaginable absurdity. Just so; and for that reason an old schoolfellow and fast friend of mine walked

before noon on that day into Savill's shop, saw that respectable individual, and engaged his three-pair-back bedroom for an uncle—Mr. William Stubbs—a quiet countryman from Norfolk, who would give no trouble whatever, but required to be boarded as well as lodged. There was no objection, my friend added, to a monthly payment in advance. Such an offer accepted itself; references were superfluous; Mr. William Stubbs could come direct from the Saracen's Head, Skinner-street, when the Norwich coach arrived, and would find the apartments ready, the sheets well aired, and a dinner ready to be served, &c. &c.

Looking down from the height of forty-five years of detective experience, I must say that was not a common device to be hatched and matured in a boy's unpractised brain, and can to this day heartily participate the delicious but of course subdued merriment with which my ante-self, at sixteen, looked on whilst the stout Stubbs slowly alighted from a hackney-coach, and, with his luggage, leisurely passed before the unregardful eyes of the Bow-street officials into Mr. Savill's

house. The worthy tailor and I have chuckled over, and drained glasses whilst chuckling over, that neat trick a hundred times.

John Watson remained about seven weeks at Savill's, during which his capture was twenty times at least reported in the newspapers. By then, vigilance, enfeebled by disappointment, had become dull, torpid, and it was judged by Watson's friends, with whom I was in secret communication, that he should no longer delay his departure for America.

As I was informed, the final arrangement come to was that Watson should embark at London. This was in accordance with my theory, that the place where it was least likely you would be sought for was that where, if sought for, you would be most easily found. I bade Watson adieu, and gaily wished him "*bon voyage*." He expressed grateful thanks for the great service I had rendered him; and yet, with a strange mistrust of one who had given such unmistakable proof of his good faith, tacitly deceived me as to the port where he purposed

embarking for the States. In so doing, he, I must believe, acted by the advice of others, not by the promptings of his own mind.

The very next day a letter was received from that "needy but loyal subject of King George, Thomas Jebb," informing the authorities that the proclaimed traitor John Watson intended to embark at Liverpool, in the liner *Washington*, which was advertised to sail on the 10th instant—four days from then. I had never been able to discover who "the needy and loyal subject" was—his real name being only communicated in confidence to the Solicitor of the Treasury; and this note completely demolished a vague suspicion which had lately arisen in my mind, pointing to a very intimate acquaintance of a friend of Watson as the traitor. I must have been mistaken, it being quite clear that Thomas Jebb only knew that Watson was about to attempt leaving the country, but not from which port. By the way, I had made it a peremptory condition with the hunted man that he should on no account confide the secret of his hiding-place to any human being,

except Mr. Grafton, a watchmaker, in Hatton-garden, a near relative of his, in whose good faith and discretion I had implicit confidence.

It was at once determined that two officers should proceed to Liverpool, and search the *Washington* when well out at sea, just previous to the pilot leaving her. My stepfather was one of the selected officers, and he being in a remarkably gracious mood, the arrest of Watson appearing to be at last assured, consented that I should accompany him. I felt a malicious pleasure in the anticipation of being a witness to the blank disappointment of the "Runners" when they found that Watson was *not* on board the *Washington*—a pleasure that would be greatly enhanced by the certainty of the fugitive's escape which would be then simmering at my heart—the London liner, in which he would have embarked, sailing on the same day as the *Washington*.

We kept strictly on the quiet in Liverpool, making no inquiries whatever, but keenly observant of the *Washington*. Ten minutes after the

Blue Peter flew out at her mast-head we were dropping down the Mersey in a stout six-oared boat, which could not fail easily to overhaul the liner unless a stiff breeze sprang up, which was not, the sailors said, in the least likely, even should the American captain disregard, as had more than once happened, the signal, to be displayed at the proper moment, of "Officers coming to visit and search the *Washington*."

Our boat had not long cleared the Mersey when we sighted another, pulled by two oars only, with one passenger sitting at the stern. The captain of our skiff, after a hasty look through his glass, said, "That boat is waiting for the *Washington*, and it's very likely the stout individual in the stern-sheets is your man, gentlemen. But if so, you will find him on board the liner. By jingo! I'm not so sure of that," added the seaman, again bringing his glass to bear upon the boat. "They don't like our looks, and are pulling like grim death back to shore. Shall we give chase? There will be plenty of time, after picking her up, to overhaul the *Washington*."

Chase was given ; the men in the strange boat strained every muscle to escape, in compliance—we could presently see, by the wild, frenzied gestures of their passenger—with his entreaties, backed no doubt by lavish promises of reward in the event of success. But the two-oared boat had not the ghost of a chance of reaching the shore before we should be alongside, and a sickening flush ran through my veins as the thought arose in my mind, that it was just possible a change in the plan of escape had taken place at the last moment, and that the frantic passenger was John Watson.

All doubt was soon over. We ran alongside the chase ; the two officers stepped from our boat to the other ; the passenger's wig was snatched off, his false whiskers ditto, and then revealed before us, in dumb terror, was—not John Watson—but the cashier of an eminent London firm, who had absconded with a considerable sum of money, and for whose apprehension a reward of one hundred pounds had been for some considerable time vainly offered. “Mr. Charles Thurston, as I'm alive,” gleefully shouted my stepfather. “We are in luck

to-day, and have a good chance of killing two gallows-birds with one stone. Now then," he added, collaring the swooning cashier, and forcing him into our boat. "Now then, we've no time to spare, and it's of no use to snivel or faint. Bring away his traps. All right. And now, captain, pull like good men for the *Washington*, which I see is running out to sea at a spanking rate."

"Yes;" said our captain, "the breeze is rising faster than I expected it would. We had better step the mast, and run up signals at once." This was done, our fellows at the same time bending to the oars with a will. For some time it was doubtful that we were seen, or, if seen, that our signal would be heeded. If that should prove so, the capture of Thurston would have ensured the escape of Watson, it being clearly impossible for us to cut off or overtake the liner, which was dashing on under a cloud of canvas. The two "Runners" were dreadfully put out, swore roundly at poor Thurston for coming in their way just at the wrong moment, and soundly rated the captain of the skiff for assuring them the small

boat might be overhauled without fear of thereby missing the *Washington*.

"It was a fair calculation," said the man, "that we might; and this fellow moaning and twisting here in the bottom of the boat must have been the man you particular wanted. All right," he added, "all right: the liner is shivering her foresail; round she comes, and will lie-to for us."

The American skipper received us with a cold, grim civility. The surrender to officers of justice of any criminal who had once set his foot on the deck of a ship sailing under the star-spangled banner was very distasteful to those "Hail Columbia!" gentlemen, even when that ship was in British waters; and but for the penalties which would be incurred, and enforced whenever the Yankee ship whose commander had wilfully refused to lie-to when properly signalled to do so, returned to a British port—they would have never, or at all events very seldom, given up any man, except it may be an atrocious murderer.

The *Washington* carried out two hundred and seventy-five passengers. It was necessary to inspect

every one of these, and afterwards search the ship, if our man were not previously found. The detention of the liner would consequently last a considerable time; and as there was a fresh and rising easterly breeze, the chagrin of the American skipper and his officers at being compelled to lose so much valuable time was proportionate. However, there was no help for it. The passengers were all ordered upon deck, ranged in the fore part of the ship, and after being singly scrutinized by the Bow-street officers, passed aft, if not the man wanted.

Whilst my stepfather and his comrade were still engaged in civilly-snappish confab, if such a phrase be permissible, with the American officers, I was pushing through the crowd of passengers, urged by a vague fear that Watson might after all be amongst them. Suddenly I started, as if an adder stung me. The reader must not forget, that not only was my boy-vanity deeply engaged, but that should Watson be taken, awkward, perilous disclosures affecting my precious self might come out on his trial.

Yes, I started as if an adder stung me; for there

before me was John Watson—his face livid, his knees knocking together, in the very ecstasy of terror. I knew him as instantly as he knew me, though his disguise, that of a stout Quaker, wearing an extensive broad-brimmed hat, a flaxen wig, and blue spectacles, was, as a disguise not meddled with, stripped away—capital. What mischievous fool or knave could have prevailed to mar so promising a project; one that, but for that exasperating interference, must, it was plain, have been successful! I did not then know, could not have believed, that it was *I* who had been purposely misled—it being feared that boyish indiscretion might at any moment make shipwreck of the scheme; or my stepfather, receiving a hint, or conceiving a suspicion of my agency in the business, might wheedle or whip me into confessing all. It could, at all events, the cunning fools reasoned, do no harm to keep me in the dark as to where Watson would embark,—then he could sleep in spite of thunder! Thomas Jebb, *not* being a boy, might of course be confided in—as his services would be required—at least to that extent. The idiots!

I repeat, that at that moment I had not the faintest suspicion that *I* could have been purposely deceived. Could I have thought so, I hope resentment for having been so treated would not have prevented me from making a last effort to save the seemingly-doomed man.

I struggled out of the mob of passengers, almost all of whom were growling, clamoring, swearing, at being compelled to undergo the insolent scrutiny of Bow-street fellows—the servile tools of an infamous aristocracy; and they heartily hoped Watson—it was soon known whom the officers were in search of—had escaped the mercenary bloodhounds set upon his track.

A hundred lights were dancing in my eyes and flashing in my brain. I could not endure the thought of Watson being carted off as it were to the gallows. To succour, protect any one, is almost invariably to become deeply interested in, attached to him or her. And my pride fiercely rebelled at the notion of being foiled, defeated in the very moment of supposed victory.

Ay, but how resist defeat—seize and bind that

vanishing victory? That was the question. An insoluble one it for some time appeared to be. Presently, as I watched the procedure going on—the division of the passengers into two parties, those who had passed the ordeal and those who had not—the “All right” of the officers, usually responded to by a curse or other fierce rebuke of their d——d insolence,—I noticed one man, standing close by Watson, and exhibiting almost as much trepidation as the proclaimed “Traitor.” Didn’t I know that man? His features seemed familiar to me. By Jove! he was Fleetwood, the runaway bankrupt builder, of Pimlico. The idea which gleamed before me widened, brightened with every passing moment. Fleetwood was not unlike Watson: the same age, complexion, stature, or nearly so. By Heavens! the thing might be done! and all Fleetwood himself would have to apprehend if taken back to London was the compulsory surrender of his person and plunder to the Commissioners of Bankruptcy. Not pleasant processes, it may be, but much preferable to being hanged by the neck ’twixt earth and sky till

you are dead. There was not a single pulse-beat to be lost, and mine was going at a gallop—so fast that I could hardly manage to scribble in pencil, on a leaf torn from a memorandum-book, these few words:—"Never say die! There's life in a mussel, yet! Be ready to take prompt advantage of any row or confusion which may occur to slip over amongst the 'passed' passengers. Whisper you are Watson, and, my life upon it, not one will expose the trick."

Sideling again amongst the fast-diminishing ranks of the unexamined passengers, I contrived to pass the slip of paper, unobserved, into Watson's hand. A minute afterwards his half-hopeful look gave assurance that he understood me.

My part in the play was next to come, and quickly. My cue for going on would be the officers' "All right," as they passed the man immediately in front of Fleetwood.

"All right!" Instantly I sprang forwards, seized the absconding bankrupt by the arm, exclaiming, as I did so, "This is he! This is the villain! I know him well!" The unfortunate man struggled

furiously, yelling with rage and spluttering out indignant denials that he was *Watson*! The officers, supposing that I meant that he *was* *Watson*, flung themselves upon him, and, after a brief struggle, mastered his desperate resistance, and got on the handcuffs. That done, they looked closely at his features—searched for the marks by which the real *Watson* could be unerringly identified.

“This fellow is not *Watson*!” exclaimed my father, turning angrily upon me. “What the devil did you mean by saying that he was?”

“I did *not* say he was *Watson*. I never thought of saying so. He is *Fleetwood*, the bankrupt builder of *Pimlico*, for whose apprehension a considerable reward has been, as you know, offered.”

“By Jove! the lad is right. It *is* *Fleetwood*! Well, little fish are sweet, and not to be sneezed at, especially as it may be feared we shall not, this time at all events, succeed in hooking the big one. Stand aside for the present, Mr. *Fleetwood*.”

During the bustle and confusion *Watson* had adroitly passed over among the examined passengers, who, as the whisper circulated that he was the

political fugitive Watson, closed round and hid him from view. Most of the crew and all the passengers—except Fleetwood, absorbed, blinded by his own misery—were witnesses of the dodge, but not one gave a hint, by word or gesture, to the officers; and they, suspecting nothing, proceeded with their work; which terminated, they searched the ship, equally without success of course. The American skipper, who had been for some time waxing terribly wroth, at last gave orders to fill—remark- ing, as he did so, with a savage growl, “that if the darned Britishers did not go over the side into their boat pretty smart, they would have the pleasure of seeing New York before they did Liver- pool again.”

This perfectly serious menace quickened our motions considerably; and we were in a very few minutes pulling for the mouth of the Mersey, with the two prisoners Thurston and Fleetwood securely in hand. That was something no doubt, but, as a compensation for Watson's *non*-capture, scarcely worth a thought—as the officers' angry, contemp- tuous looks, as they eyed the crest-fallen captives,

abundantly testified. There was a sardonic sneer glistening out of Thurston's grey eyes and curling his thin lip, as he returned the officers' scowl, which I could not at first comprehend. I soon did.

"The *Washington*," said Thurston, who had been observing for a minute or two the fast disappearing ship—"The *Washington* is hull down already; it would require a lively craft to overhaul her, and John Watson may hug himself on his safety as confidently as if she were already moored in New York harbour!"

"What's the fellow prating about?" growled my stepfather, fiercely. "What does he know about Watson?"

"Only this,—that he is on board the *Washington*! That you wonderful clever fellows let him slip through your buttered fingers as easily as a live eel could!"

"That's a lie, Mr. Thurston! Had Watson been on board the *Washington*, we should have him here as safely as we have you and Fleetwood."

"John Watson *is* on board the *Washington*, I tell you, disguised as a Quaker! Why, you must

have seen him in the crowd, wearing a tremendous broad-brimmed and blue spectacles! I had climbed up the ship's side, just to see what was going on, and spied him out—knew him at a glance. You must, I say, remember having seen such a man; and you can't remember having examined, questioned him? Ah, you may well look at one another," continued Thurston, with exultant glee. "He slipped aft when you were so busy with friend Fleetwood here. Cleverly done, upon my soul! very cleverly done, indeed! I glory in the fellow. Ho! ho! Wonderful cute chaps are our celebrated 'Runners!' The notion of anyone throwing dust in *their* eyes! Quite impossible, of course! Not to be done; certainly not. Here's to John Watson's jolly good health," added the spiteful swindler, drawing a pocket-pistol from his vest; "and wishing, with all my heart, I was as certainly on board the *Washington* as that he is. Never mind, gentlemen thief-catchers; keep your spirits up, as I do. Better luck next time, perhaps, for you as well as me. But, really, it must be aggravating to have had the man in

the hollow of one's hand and let him get away, with no chance of setting your blessed eyes on him again! I should be fit to hang myself if I were you; I should, indeed. And, Lord! what a wigging you'll get from the nobs, when it comes to be known. I'll take care it *shall* be known. Lose your berths, of course! Mean—mean, Mr. Runner-the-second, and almost as clever as your pal,” added Thurston, as the officer, feeling riled and hardly knowing how to vent his spite, clapped a pair of handcuffs on the cashier's wrists. “Mean, Mr. Runner; but there is some excuse to be made for men who have met with such a terrible sell. Watson will, no doubt, be printing it in the New York papers, headed ‘The famous Bow-street Block-heads!’ Ho! ho!”

COINERS AND FORGERS.

WE left Liverpool for London early on the evening of the same day—my more than usually sourly-sullen stepfather, Thurston, and myself perched upon the roof of the “Eclipse,”—the equally sour and sullen second officer and Fleetwood upon that of the “Telegraph”—both fast coaches, and rival racers as far as Birmingham. As a measure of ordinary precaution, the handcuffs were not removed from the wrists of either of the prisoners. All went well till we neared the small town of Warrington, when the “Telegraph,” which we had passed a few minutes before, put on a spurt, came up with us at a sharp turn of the narrow road, the two coaches became in some way interlocked, and over ours went, pitching the outside passengers upon the hard road with stunning violence. I did not, however, though sorely bruised, lose

myself ; nor did my stepfather, whose first anxious thought was for his prisoner,—not particularly to ascertain if his bones were broken, or if he had jumped this bank and shoal of time from the roof of the “Eclipse,” but to assure himself whether his person was safe—whether dislocated or dead was, considered from a Bow-street detective point of view, a matter of minor importance.

Mr. Thurston was quite safe, though not sound apparently, as he moaned dismally. Assistance presently arrived from the Black Bear Tavern ; a stout pull at the brandy-flask enabled us all to get on our legs without much assistance, and having shaken ourselves, to walk on to the Black Bear—limpingly some of us, but no bones were broken. We had been more frightened than hurt. This seemed at least to be the case with all of us till we reached the tavern, when Thurston suddenly manifested alarming symptoms. His injuries must have been internal ; for though he writhed, twisted, groaned in a frightful manner, not the slightest external hurt, scarcely an abrasion, could be perceived. Supported to bed, he

piteously prayed my stepfather to relieve him of the handcuffs, which request was sternly refused till a medical man should have certified that the sufferer was not shamming Abraham.

"I will go for a doctor myself," said my father. "The nearest I am likely to meet with is a mile away, I am told. I will, however, endeavour to be here with him in half-an-hour from this at furthest. You," he added, speaking to me, "will remain in this room with Mr. Thurston."

The wary officer then left the room; we heard him go downstairs, and out of the house. It was certain he had gone out, for we heard him call loudly outside to some one, asking when the "Eclipse" would be ready for another start.

The afflictive paroxysms under which Thurston was writhing and tossing ceased with miraculous suddenness. He rose half up in his bed, and hearkened with breathless eagerness to my father's heavy, departing footfall; he then lay back on his pillow for a few minutes, silent and thoughtful. Rousing himself with a start, remembering he had

no time to lose, he exclaimed, in a tone not of entreaty but of command :

“Youngster, bring me the brandy-flask. Quick ! Place it in my hands. I must have a good pull now, and take the rest with me.”

The peremptory tone of the fellow startled me somewhat, indicating as it did the possession of power to enforce compliance with his wishes, whatever they might be. I, however, replied, with as much calm unconcern as I could assume :—

“If you required brandy, Mr. Thurston, you should have asked the officer who has just left, for some. For myself, I dare not presume to——”

“D—n the officer who has just left,” he fiercely interrupted. “You shall hand me the brandy—the key of the cupboard is in your pocket. And you shall, moreover, help me—passively help me ; I require no active assistance—to make my escape. You have done such a service to far guiltier criminals in the eye of the law than I am. Listen, young man,” he went on to say, with hot vehemence ; “listen, young man. I closely twigged

your manœuvres on board the *Washington* with John Watson ; saw you scribble something on a small scrap of paper, which you slyly slipped into his hand. I noticed all that followed, and your active, clever agency in achieving success. It did you credit. There is stuff in you to make a score of such officers as your father and his comrogue if they could make a joint-stock contribution of their brains. Now, mark me, young man. Do as I ask, and your secret is safe. Fire should not burn it out of me. Refuse—dare to hinder me from getting away—and many days will not have passed before you are caged in Newgate, charged with the high crime of aiding and abetting the escape of a felon whom the Government are especially desirous of bringing to justice. You too—who are, I understand, a cadet-constable—to have acted in that way ! Transportation for the term of your natural life is the very mildest sentence that would be passed upon you for a crime which might be visited with death. Now, then, will you hand me the brandy ?”

The fellow’s words struck me all of a heap.

Whether or not his exposition of the criminal law of England as affecting the offence of which, acting in a spirit of Quixotism, I had been guilty, was exactly correct, it was quite evident that, the criminalizing circumstances being proveable by Thurston—confound him!—I had got myself into a very serious predicament.

I hardly knew how to decide ; but the instinct of self-preservation,—which is, we know, the first law of nature,—prevailed, as it ever does. I gave Thurston the brandy-flask. Having indulged in a long pull thereat, he sprang off the bed, as light, active as ever, nothing of the slightest consequence ailing him, and requested me to adjust his cloak so that the handcuffs and the flask held between his palms might not be observed. I did so, mechanically as it were, like one in a dream. “You had better,” said he, “feign sleep. Most chaps of your age would feel drowsy after being pitched off the top of a coach and recovered with brandy. It will be supposed I took the opportunity of escaping while you slept. Good-bye! I know the country here about very

well, and have little doubt of getting clear away if I only pass unchallenged out of the tavern. Good-bye, lad, once more. If it should ever be in my power to pay you back this good turn, depend upon it I will." He spoke throughout in a quivering, earnest whisper,—boldly as the words read. The situation was certainly an unnerving one. Success would altogether depend upon his being recognised or not by any one below as the handcuffed prisoner. It must be remembered that I could not have removed the iron-cuffs except with a file, not having the key; and I had no file.

Thurston just managed to turn the door-handle with his fettered hands, without letting fall the flask. Softly—a cat could not tread more softly—he crept out; crept down a back stair. I counted the moments as they flew upon the dial of my watch. Ten minutes passed: still no noise, no bustle below. The fellow had escaped; at all events, for a time.

I sat, lay, walked upon tenterhooks till my stepfather returned; notwithstanding which, I was snoring heavily when he entered the room, shook

me roughly, and asked me what the devil had become of the prisoner? I at length said, staring wildly about, that I didn't know (which was true enough), got heartily cursed for a sleepy, blubber-brained booby, and ordered to assist in the attempt to be immediately made to recapture the vanished cashier.

The search was not very eagerly pressed. All men, my stern stepfather not excepted, are frail; and one especial weakness of his was a strong aversion, not so much to *being* done—though that tried his amiable temper—as being laughed at for having suffered himself to be done. In the John Watson case, moreover, more serious penalties than being laughed at might be incurred. Was it not excusable, then, remembering that the firmest-footed man is apt to stumble upon slippery paths, that he should not be so solicitous as he would otherwise have been to secure the babbling cashier's presence in London? I most decidedly think so. All the money and effects found in Thurston's possession had been secured for the plundered firm. What more, as commonly rea-

sonable men, could they desire? The subject was never alluded to by him; but my own opinion is, that when he left the Black Bear to go in real or pretended search of a doctor, my father was still undetermined to give or not to give the cashier a chance of snatching the key of the fields. Hence his refusal to remove the handcuffs. Should Thurston be seized when attempting to leave the house, the unlocked handcuffs would prove that the officer in whose actual charge the prisoner was had not connived at the escape, whilst locked handcuffs would not hinder the wearer from making smart way to a place of safety. At all events, the fellow was gone, handcuffs and all—a very happy riddance for both of us.

When I again saw William Thurston, five years or thereabouts subsequently, I had yet greater reason to rejoice that in consequence of the overturn of the “Eclipse” coach he was for once enabled to give his captors the go-by.

Those five years or thereabouts had been spent by me more as an amateur desultory detective

than as one having real, important business on hand with which the responsible heads of the Bow-street Police Department could confidently entrust me.

My twenty-first birth-day reached, it behoved me to address myself to the business of life with resolute, sustained zeal and vigour; and this the more necessarily that I was thrown entirely upon my own resources. My stepfather had been mortally wounded a twelvemonth previously, by the notorious burglar Amos Layton, into whose London *lair*, in Wych-street, he had rashly ventured alone, with a warrant to arrest him for a robbery with violence at Wanstead House, Essex (Wellesley Pole's magnificently-decorated mansion). Had Layton been alone, like my brave relative,—a braver man, cooler in presence of peril, I have never seen,—there would not, I think—though Layton had plenty of bulldog pluck—have been much doubt of the issue. Unfortunately, Layton had two of his miscreant gang within whistle-call. The odds were too great; and after fighting his desperate way out of the house, the murdered

officer, when he had staggered as far as the Strand, fell senseless on the pavement. Two days afterwards he died.

Layton was not taken at that time; but he ultimately died, as he used when in drink to boast to his associates he should, "with his shoes on." That is to say, he was hanged at the Old Bailey in, if I rightly remember, the year 1827, for a burglary at the house of Ms. Peters, an aged, highly respected habitant of Walworth, who expired a short time afterwards, of the shock caused by being awoke in the dead of night by a craped ruffian standing over her with a pistol in his hand, demanding to know where her money was to be found.

I did address myself with sustained vigour to the real business of life, and with such fair success as to gain me the confidence of our chiefs. A stronger proof of this could not be given than their entrusting me, still young as I was, though possessed of remarkable physical strength, and one of the best wrestlers out of Cornwall, with the important but very perilous task of ferreting out the haunts of a skilfully organized confederacy of

coiners, their modes of business, the channels through which they contrived to circulate such vast quantities of spurious coin, and bring, not the poor devils caught passing their wares purchased of agents at a price which left the manufacturers a tremendous profit, but the principals themselves, who were believed to be men of capital, and acting in conjunction with a body of similar swindlers established in Hamburg.

The information which could be furnished for my guidance was of the scantiest kind. Not one of the wretches who had been convicted of passing the worthless coin—coin at all events that was struck from the same dies, and which could be easily distinguished from the coarser work of less skilful scoundrels (the “milling,” most difficult of all coining processes, was skilfully executed and by machinery, not by hand)—could, though quite willing, and eager to do so for the high rewards promised, give the slightest clue that might lead to the discovery of “the plant,” nor could personally identify one of the direct agents of the confederacy, much less one of its chiefs.

The mischief, too, was assuming frightful dimensions. There was no doubt whatever that the same gang, emboldened by success, had started a new and profitable branch of money manufacture, the forging of bank-notes, and were already doing a first-rate business in that line, their operations being chiefly confined to the issue of country notes, at that time forming a large proportion of the circulating medium, and payable at the London agents of the banks. This plan had its peculiar advantages. The great, almost insuperable, difficulty was avoided of producing a passable imitation of a Bank of England note. Not only was the watermark a stumbling-block in the way, but the fine engraving could only be executed by first-rate artists, whilst country bank-notes, for the most part, could be accurately imitated by comparative bunglers. Then in counties, or provincial towns, such notes chiefly circulated amongst persons but little skilled as a class in such matters; and who, though they might look askance at a Bank of England note, rarely thought of doubting the genuineness of one of their *own* bank. It was

reported to the office that no less than twelve hundred, possibly more, one-pound-notes of the Leeds Old Bank had found their way into circulation in less than two months.

Great alarm naturally prevailed, and it was determined to spare no effort that might present a chance of reaching the concoctors of so gigantic a system of fraud. The belief was that the seat of manufacture, if such a phrase may be used, was somewhere in Whitechapel, but nothing had been positively ascertained in that respect.

“I have sent for you, Clarke”—(of course, this is a *nom de plume*)—“I have sent for you, Clarke,” said the chief clerk at Bow-street, “in order to advise with and employ you in hunting down the audacious gang of coiners and forgers who have hitherto so provokingly baffled all our efforts. First, however, it may be well to remark, lest you should be too much puffed up with vanity, that you have been selected for this service, principally, I do say solely, because you are not much known as a Bow-street officer. Your face cannot be familiar to the frequenters of police and other

courts, whilst our old hands are, I have no manner of doubt, as well known personally to these audacious swindlers as to ourselves. Your hands will not be tied," continued the clerk; "you can choose your own mode of action, take your own time, but must not let the grass grow under your feet. Remember to be cautious, wary, discreet, as well as bold, for the service required may involve personal danger. Honest, zealous endeavour will be liberally rewarded, even though unsuccessful; but should you succeed, you will be a made man in your vocation. Now go and consult the officers who have already done their best and failed to put salt upon the cunning rascals' tails. They have orders to withhold nothing from you, and you will report progress, or no progress, to me daily, oftener if need be, by letter."

Day after day passed fruitlessly away. Three weeks were gone, and I had not even begun to make progress. Of course, I took especial care not to have personal communication with the passers of bad coin who were apprehended for that offence.

Only one utterer of forged notes, John Martell, could be traced, and he either knew nothing, or would not betray his employers. It was hoped that the near prospect of the gallows would loosen his tongue, but this hope, rather than expectation, was frustrated by his acquittal upon a technical plea—a variance in the indictment. I, however, took care to see the fellows and retain as accurate memory-portraits of them as I could.

It was by doing so that I first obtained a chance of getting at the heart of the mystery. I was walking leisurely along Old Compton-street, Soho, when a gentlemanly-looking man, but who the dullest detective would, at a glance, perceive was “made up,” came bustling out of one of the best houses in the street, and was passing, when his eye caught mine, causing him to start, shrink as it were, with surprise, and it seemed alarm. He was himself again in a moment, and quickly proceeded on his way.

“Surely,” mused I, “that face is not unfamiliar to me. Where can I have seen it?”

The place he had come out of was a gold and

silver refiner's shop, on the door of which was a large brass plate, inscribed with the name of Scobell. There was a considerable quantity of plate, battered gold and silver coins, and foreign bank-notes in the window, over which was painted the words, "Scobell & Co., late Parke, established in 1803." Evidently a highly respectable concern. The "made up" gentleman I had seen leave the shop had, probably, been there to dispose of some piece of plate. The question returned who was he, where had I seen him? I went into a tavern "to smoke upon it"—an expedient I had before adopted, in cases of personal puzzlement, with success. It was so on this occasion. "William Thurston, as I'm alive!" exclaimed I aloud, before my first pipe was half consumed. "William Thurston! I thought he was in the States. Certainly, a foolhardy man not to be there, or somewhere else, beyond the reach of British justice. I shall not, however, make or meddle with him; such fellows, who will so tempt their fate, are safe to meet with it sooner or later, and generally when least expected. William

Thurston will fall, or be pushed over the precipice, upon the brink of which he chooses to walk, without any agency of mine.’’

Though I so reasoned and resolved, I found myself oftener walking along Old Compton-street, Soho, than I had been in the habit of doing. The refiner’s shop had some occult attraction for me. I never passed it without peering in through the window, and curiously watching the old wizened, grey-haired man, perched upon a stool inside a counter, and doing nothing, that I ever saw, except pore over an old newspaper through silver-rimmed spectacles. There did not appear to be much business attached to the concern established in 1803. A quiet business, at all events ; chiefly transacted, perhaps, by means of parcels and letters. Very likely.

One day, about noon, nine or ten days after I had seen William Thurston leave the shop, I, peering in as usual, was really startled, though certainly there was no tangible reason why I should be, to see that worthy in close conference with the white-haired man—Mr. Scobell himself,

perhaps. So absorbed were they in the subject under discussion, that though in hastily, awkwardly withdrawing sidelong-wise out of their sight the handle of my umbrella struck sharply against the protective wire-netting fastened to the lower part of the window, neither looked round nor seemed to hear the grating ring of the blow.

As before remarked, I felt no wish to act spy upon William Thurston's movements, and yet so strongly was my curiosity excited by merely seeing him in conversation with a respectable tradesman or tradesman's assistant, that, without reasoning about it for a moment, I at once made myself ready for unobservedly dogging his steps when he should leave the shop. It was easy to prevent him from recognising who was following, should he turn round and cast his eyes in my direction.

I had on a long Spanish cloak, much worn at that time ; by turning up the fur-collar of which the lower part of the face might be completely hidden, especially if one had a "comforter" round one's neck, as, it being cold and rainy, happened

to be the case with me. If, in addition, the hat were well pulled down over the eyes, and the open umbrella dexterously managed, recognition, except by the closest scrutiny, was impossible.

I had to wait a considerable time for the appearance of friend Thurston. His business with the gold and silver refiner was no doubt serious, important. Might it possibly have reference to the balance forthcoming on that plate hurriedly thrown a few nights since into the crucible ! Such transactions had taken place with firms quite as respectable and long-established as Scobell and Co., late Parke.

At length Mr. Thurston emerged into the street—bright, rubicund, jubilant, spite of the wretched weather—and walked jauntily away, I following. He walked directly on, took short cuts through passages, till he reached the Crown Tavern, in the Curtain-road, Shoreditch, which he entered, with me still close at his heels, made some inquiry I did not distinctly hear, and, satisfied with the reply—"Yes, some time ; about half-an-hour,"—ordered two hot brandies, and walked into the

coffee-room. Determined to follow up the game which I surmised to be a-foot, whatever that game might prove to be, I, though with some hesitation, went into the coffee-room.

Good heavens ! The man whom Thurston was shaking hands and laughing with was John Martell, the fellow charged with uttering some of the forged notes, and who had escaped conviction through a legal flaw in the indictment. Here was a discovery, or at least, to speak soberly, a clue which might lead to important discoveries.

Quickly ensconcing myself in the next high partition-box to that in which they were seated, and consequently completely hidden from view, I listened eagerly to their at first distinctly audible conversation, relating principally to the weather and kindred topics. By-and-by, more interesting subjects engaged their thoughts and tongues, as was evident by their subdued, whispering tones, rendering it impossible for me to hear a word they were saying.

They drank freely, very freely ; but the liquor had no effect in the way of unguarding their

tongues. Long practice in that discipline, wherever it was possible they might be overheard, had perfected a strong habit, which indulgence could not loosen. I have observed the same thing in many persons.

It was quite dark when they rose to go away.

“You will not see Jane to-night, I suppose?” said Thurston, as they were leaving the room.

“No ; not till to-morrow night. I must call on the parson, you know.”

“Ah ! yes, to be sure. Good night.”

I had been in doubt which it would be wisest to mark down, Thurston or Martell. Those few words decided me. Jane was probably a daughter of Thurston, and a strict watch kept over his place would no doubt put me in the way of tracking Martell to *his* haunts. I would continue to attend upon Thurston.

John Martell was a good-looking, youngish man ; he would have been handsome but for the searing hand of early and excessive intemperance.

Thurston lodged at No. 19, Lower-road, Islington, where he passed under the name of Warren.

This I learned from a beer-boy, who had just delivered a pot of ale at No. 19.

“Nobody of the name of Chilton lives at No. 19, sir. Only one gentleman lodges there; his name is Warren; and there is a Mrs. Warren and two grown-up gals, whose names is Rogers, not Warren. You might have seen Mr. Warren go in a few minutes ago,” added the boy, with grateful acceptance of the sixpenny-piece I tendered; “or perhaps the gentleman you want is one of them—and there are lots—that come to see Mr. Warren. Shall I go and ask, sir?”

I thanked the lad, declined his offer, and went my way.

So then William Thurston was determined to get hanged! One touch-and-go escape from the iron clutch of criminal justice had been no warning to him! That is, I am sorry to say, a too common case. Well, if Wilful would to water, Wilful would drench; nothing surer than that. And now to follow up the promising start I had made. That was the pressing question. Handle the unhatched egg gently, warm it into life with

watchful care. Certainly ; but how—how to set about the process? Lie low, completely out of sight, and sing small, or, better still, not sing at all for a time. To be sure, only a fool would do otherwise. Yet that would be merely waiting for an opportunity which might never come. If I were worth my salt as a detective I ought to *create* an opportunity of snatching success. But the first step towards that desirable end ; in what direction to take that ? Clearly by watching John Martell on the morrow evening, when he left No 19. Something might come of that.

At my post in barely sufficient time. Martell, when parting with Thurston at the Crown Inn, Curtain-road, had used the words, "To-morrow night ;" and though, not to throw away a chance, I was on the watch by half-past six, I had not been so three minutes when a hackney-coach drove up to the door of No. 19, out of which presently came Mr. John Martell, dressed in holiday costume, conducting a gaily-attired and as far as I could judge from a distance and by the uncertain light, a handsome young

woman. "Drury Lane Theatre—Box Entrance," said Mr. Martell, stepping into the hack, which the next minute drove off.

Decidedly a handsome woman was Miss Jane Rogers, one of Thurston's stepdaughters: a very handsome young woman, especially by gaslight and attired as ladies in the dress-circle of a theatre are required or expected to be. And either I was much mistaken, or there was a latent fire in those gleaming black eyes of hers, which, if stirred by anger, jealous anger—and I should think a dissipated, vulgar *roué* as his appearance betokened Martell to be, was a likely fellow to give occasion to jealous anger—would pour forth consuming *lava*. There was a remote chance in that, and it was imperative to neglect nothing that promised the semblance of a chance.

After setting down Miss Jane at No. 19, Lower-road, Islington, Mr. John Martell drove to a house of ill-fame. I was not, consequently, able to track him to his own home that night. The next evening the stars were more propitious. He visited

Miss Jane Rogers, remained a short time only, and walked home to his lodgings in John-street, Minories—a respectable place let out in lodgings by a tailor and his wife, who kept a shop, and dwelt on the basement-floor.

Mr. John Martell's *alias* in John-street, Minories, was William Steevens. People I inquired of,—he was seeking a situation at the West End, and I had been deputed to make strict inquiries respecting his character, &c.—said he was known to be a gay spark, who spent money freely, and was perhaps a little too fond of the company of ladies. However, it was a long lane that had no turning, and it was thought he would tie-up soon with the daughter of the landlord of the Jolly Butchers, Whitechapel-road. She was a smart wench, might make a good wife, though a bit of a shrew, and would have lots of tin, which made them wonder why he was looking out for a situation. Steevens passed some hours there almost every evening, but kept himself a good deal to himself and the young woman, not liking, it seemed, to mix with the general company.

I could easily understand that. His first, but I was strongly of opinion not his last, appearance in the Old Bailey dock had naturally increased his repugnance to mix with general society. But courting the pretty daughter of the landlord of the Jolly Butchers, with a view to speedy marriage! That now looked like a winning-horse, if well jockeyed. What would fire-eyed Miss Jane have to say to that? and sure as death she knew all about the gang of coiners and forgers—could blow them to Lucifer with a breath. But first to positively ascertain if the report were true that Steevens, *alias* Martell, was *bonâ fide* engaged to Mary Hawkins, daughter of Joel Hawkins, whom I knew by reputation to be quite as jolly and much redder than the Jolly Butchers swinging and creaking outside his well-frequented hostelry.

Quite true! I peeped beneath a lifted corner of the green dwarf-curtain drawn across a small window in the partition which divided the inner from the outer bar, and I saw quite enough in that brief glance to prove to me that both meant getting married as quickly as possible;

the girl influenced, it may fairly be supposed, by misplaced affection, the man by desire of both maid and money. The licence, I ascertained, had been applied for. That grave fact placed beyond a doubt, I wrote and posted to Miss Jane Rogers, 19, Lower-road, Islington, the following epistle:—

“ A devoted friend and admirer of Miss Jane Rogers—who has for some time past watched the goings on of Mr. Martell with eyes, he candidly admits, sharpened by jealous envy—begs to inform the beloved of his soul, that the villain whom she has in the unsuspecting innocence of her own heart believed to be an honourable man, is about to be married to the daughter of Joel Hawkins, the landlord of the Jolly Butchers tavern, High-street, Whitechapel. The licence has been bespoken: this fact can be verified at Whitechapel Church. The young woman's name is Mary Hawkins. He marries her in the name of Steevens, which is that he goes by in the locality. He is generally at the Jolly Butchers from seven till nine in the evening, philandering with the pretty

Mary. May the writer of this hope, though he has never till now told his love in words, not having been blest with the opportunity of doing so—permission to hope, this is all he asks—that when time shall have caused Miss Jane Rogers to forget, not only the shameful outrage itself, but the scoundrel who has subjected her to it, that he will be allowed to make himself known to the beloved of his heart, and cast himself and all which he possesses at her feet.

“A line—one blessed line only—addressed A.W., Saint Martin’s-le-Grand Post-office, would be esteemed a favour to be humbly grateful for throughout life. This evening Martell, otherwise Steevens, will certainly be at the Jolly Butchers, in company with, it is said, very pretty Mary Hawkins, in the inner bar.”

Having posted this precious stuff, which I felt sure would do its work, with my own hands, I was satisfied that mischief was a-foot, and could scarcely fail of taking the turn which would lead to the success of the difficult enterprise with which I had been entrusted.

I was early that evening in the smoking-room adjoining the bar of the Jolly Butchers, feeling something like one who had fired a train, and impatiently awaits, himself in safety, the thunder-blast.

Martell also came early. He and Mary had been billing and cooing for perhaps half-an-hour, when suddenly the door of the common room was flung wide, and in the opening stood the fine figure of Jane Rogers, drawn up to its full height, and her dilated eyes shooting flaming daggers as she glared at us innocents, and fiercely demanded if Mr. Steevens — if Mr. Martell was in the house.

“In the inner bar, miss,” said one of the company, pointing with his pipe. “*They* are in there, miss.”

“Miss” was in there too in a jiffy; and the hurricane of abuse, rage, astonishment, terror, which burst forth was really deafening. Mary was as nothing in the hands of the terrible Jane, who literally seized her by the hair of the head, and was dragging her forth as if to summary execution

before the astounded father or Martell could effectually interfere. I did not wait to witness the end of the fray. It was not my game to speak with Miss Jane just then. The humble, adoring lover ought not to see his charmer when passion transformed, if it assuredly did not dim, the brightness of her beauty.

“A. W. would hear from J. R. on the morrow.” This was the curt acknowledgment of my eloquent epistle.

A. W. did hear from the beauteous virago on the morrow. The note, a brief one, contained an assignation, which I did not fail to keep. And upon my word, so well did I play my part—I have often thought my true destiny was the stage—that the infuriated young woman really imagined that after handing over, with her help, Martell and Co. to the tender mercies of the hangman, I should only be too happy if graciously permitted by her to encircle my own neck with another kind, but often as fatal a noose as that peculiar to the finisher of the law. She was, as I have said, eaten up with passion; the passion of jealousy, of revenge—

vengeance insatiable. She went direct to the point. Martell, counting no doubt that her strong love would shield him from any fatal consequence, flatly refused to give up Mary Hawkins and her money. "Since he will wed the minx," exclaimed the amiable Jane, "Jack Ketch shall give the groom away, if he cannot the bride." She still however hesitated to utter the irrevocable words which would seal the doom of the coiners and forgers; though she had gone much too far to recede with safety, even to herself. I felt quite confident of the issue.

At last an appointment was arranged when all would be settled, the decisive words spoken; the conditions being that her vengeance and my (pretended) love should be gratified as soon as the hanging and marrying ministers could perform their functions.

Shortly before the appointed hour, I received a note changing the venue. Instead of 19, Lower-road, Islington, I was to meet her at a house in Whitechapel.

So convinced was I of the woman's sincerity of

rage, her rabid thirst of vengeance, that a thought of treachery did not for a moment cross my mind. I have often since wondered at such blind confidence on my part.

The house was a roomy, desolate one—contiguous to other decaying, untenanted, equally desolate houses. The man who admitted, ushered me high upstairs into a dreary apartment, said the “lady” would be there almost immediately, and left me in the black darkness, taking with him the candle with which he had lighted me and himself up the rotting stairs. I heard him turn the key of the door, and, for the first time, a thrill of fear shot through me. Had Jane Rogers and John Martell been reconciled? If so, the safety of the gang would imperatively require that I should be quietly put out of the way. Whilst greatly agitated by such reflections, the key again turned in the door, and a man with a lantern in his hand entered the apartment. He was William Thurston! Holding the lantern aloft, close to my face, he exclaimed: “It is as I feared, Henry Clarke. You have madly suffered your-

self to be lured to destruction—though she intended honestly at first—by Jane, one of the daughters of my termagant, wicked wife, to whom, from the day our marriage, I have been a bond-slave. Jane and Martell were married this morning. A sufficient number of the gang will be here in about an hour to quietly settle scores with you. There is but one resource. I promised not to fail you in the hour of need, and I will not. Bad as I may be, I am not all bad. Look, here is a coil of rope. We must descend from the narrow window. Have you a sufficient force of officers within call?”

“Not within call. In half-an-hour a quite sufficient force will be assembled.”

“That must do. The next point is, whether there is a reasonable assurance that, should I enable the authorities to break up the confederacy of ruffians with whom I have in a manner been compelled to associate, I shall be allowed to leave England in freedom?”

I said that there could be no doubt that he would. He believed, trusted in me; and we were soon safe on *terra firma*, though the descent by

the slippery rope, easy enough I dare say to sailors, was both painful and perilous.

An hour afterwards, the plant at Scobell and Co.'s, Old Compton-street, Soho, and the more extensive one in Whitechapel, were seized. A few only of the gang escaped. Martell, Simonds, and Curtis were hanged at the Old Bailey; the others variously sentenced to transportation and imprisonment. William Thurston embarked with all speed for America. I never heard what became of Jane Rogers, though I made frequent inquiries.

No. 12, LOWNDES SQUARE.

THE failure of Justice in the remarkable case of Sheen, or Shea, the child-slayer, excited, it will be remembered, feelings of uncontrollable surprise and anger in the minds of the British community. Sheen, who kept a raffish public-house in Saint Giles's, London, cut off, in a fit of drunken rage, literally cut off, his child's head. He was arraigned for the murder, and ultimately acquitted—the popular notion being that he escaped conviction in consequence of having been indicted in a wrong name. This was a misconception. The result was a gross blot in the records of English criminal practice; but not quite so bad as that. Mike Sheen was indicted by the name, if I remember rightly, of Michael Shea, and a true bill for wilful murder was returned by the grand jury. The prisoner pleaded not guilty; and Mr. Adolphus,

the then Old Bailey counsel *par excellence*, objected that the accused's name was Mike Shea, as set forth in the verdict of wilful murder returned by the coroner's inquisition. In those days a judge had no power to amend any clerical error in an indictment; and Mr. Burbage, junior counsel for the Crown (his leader, Mr. Alley, being absent for the moment), consented, the Recorder concurring, that Shea should be tried on the inquisition. Mr. Adolphus saw his chance and seized it. In his seemingly careless, off-handed way, he said, that if that were to be done, it would be necessary to take a formal verdict of acquittal under the bill found by the grand jury. The Recorder acquiesced; the formal verdict was given, and recorded, as of course, by the clerk of arraigns. The prisoner was then charged as Mike Shea, upon the inquisition; Mr. Alley, who had returned into Court, was about to open the case for the Crown, when Mr. Adolphus objected that the prisoner had been already tried for the alleged crime, and acquitted—his plea, in technical phrase, being that of "*Autrefois acquit*." This was a bombshell—the well-known

inflexible rule of English law being that no one can be put in danger, that is tried twice, upon the same charge. A great wrangle of words followed ; but the fact that, through the adroit management of Mr. Adolphus, the prisoner had, upon the face of the record, been acquitted of the murder of the child could not be disputed. At last, the prisoner was put back, and the proceedings adjourned till the morrow, when Mr. Justice Littledale would be on the bench. The plea was accordingly argued before that grave dignitary, Mr. Adolphus tendering proof that the Mike Shea then in the dock was the Michael Sheen who had been legally acquitted of the crime for which it was sought to again put him in danger. Mr. Justice Littledale retired to consult with his learned brother Judge Bailey, though he himself had, unfortunately, no doubt whatever that the prisoner must be discharged. Mr. Justice Bailey proved to be of the same opinion ; and it was announced by the Bench that the great principle involved, that no one could be put in danger by the Crown twice for the same offence, was too sacred to be tampered with. The

prisoner was therefore discharged from the dock, amidst a hurricane of groans, yells, and curses.

Sheen's technical acquittal did not, however, place him out of danger. It was hoped that he would be caught in the commission of some crime which, if of infinitely less moral turpitude than murder, would confer the right to hang him. Bow-street detectives were ordered to keep a sharp look out upon the fellow, a duty zealously performed by myself and others without material result. Once I felt sure that we had him on the hip. A Mr. Truman, of Sheffield, lost his purse whilst pushing his way with the crowd to the pit of the Little Haymarket Theatre. His pocket had, no doubt, been picked ; and one of our fellows fancied he had observed Sheen amongst the people waiting outside the theatre till the doors opened. This did not appear very likely, Sheen's tastes not being at all theatrical. The fact was, however, ascertained to be as the officer had stated. A man, calling himself Wilford, who had just returned from New York, where he had made the acquaintance of a near relative of Sheen's, had called upon the latter

about eleven in the forenoon ; treated the general company, Sheen in particular, most liberally ; was loud in praise of the States ; and urged the landlord, especially as certain circumstances must render his continuance in the cursed old country unpleasant, to emigrate, accompanying him, Wilford, who intended to stay in England about a month only. Sheen was delighted at meeting with such a seemingly respectable, sympathising friend ; and finally accepted Wilford's offer to treat him to the play. At the close of the performance Wilford left Sheen, saying he should sleep at the same hotel—Sheen did not remember the name, but thought it was the Blue Boar—where he had put up on arriving in London. He had not been again seen up to that time by Sheen ; and on inquiry at the Blue Boar, Holborn, and half-a-dozen other Blue Boars, no such person as Mr. Wilford was described to be could be heard of.

Sheen savagely, and with some reason, complained that he should be suspected of picking a stranger's pocket, and have his house searched, merely because he chanced to be one of a crowd of people

waiting for admission at the doors of a theatre, and was sternly told that though lawyercraft had withdrawn his neck from a richly-deserved halter, he must not expect to meet with the consideration due to even ordinary ruffians. Sheen, it is right to state, always asserted that he was not guilty in intention of killing the child; that he was, in short, insane at the time, from the influence of drink, and was not master of himself or conscious of what he was doing. This, I dare say, was partially true.

Mr. Truman's loss was a rather heavy one,—his purse, a leathern bag, having contained fifteen ten-pound Bank of England notes, besides gold and silver. Of only seven of these notes could the number be ascertained. These he had taken a few days previous to the robbery, in change for a cheque, at Child's banking-house, near Temple-bar. I accompanied him thither, obtained the numbers, and gave formal notice at the Bank of England that they had been stolen. Two or three hours after that had been done, a respectable-looking man presented himself at the office in Bow-street; said

his name was Wilford ; that having called that morning at Sheen's, he was induced by what was there told him to inquire upon what grounds the police suspected him of having picked some gentleman's pocket.

The case being in my hands, I shortly replied that his having been seen near the gentleman who was robbed at the time when the robbery must have been committed, and in company with the notorious Sheen, fully justified such quiet inquiry as had been made ; and that having given that worthy a false address, supposing Sheen, with whom he had been drinking and gambling, did not really know where he (Wilford) might be found, did not tend to allay suspicion. Mr. Wilford indignantly denied that he had given Sheen a false address. He told him that he lodged at the Golden Cross, Charing-cross. Sheen, whom he had only called upon because he had promised a relative of his established in New York to do so, must have misheard, misunderstood him.

“The Golden Cross, Charing-cross ! Why, that is where Mr. Truman himself, the gentleman whose

pocket was picked, is staying. I have been there several times to speak with him, but did not, that I remember, see you."

"Nor do I recollect having seen *you* there," was the sharp retort; "the one circumstance being just as important, it strikes me, as the other. At all events, you now know where I am to be found. This is all I have to say, except," added he, swelling and strutting like a turkey cock as he marched out of the office, "except that Bow-street officers are a set of cursed impertinent fellows, if you are a fair sample of the pack."

The man's bounce did not impose upon me. I had not so neglected opportunities of discerning character, slight as the indices might be, as not to mark my gentleman's quivering furtiveness of aspect, brazen as was the mind mask he assumed. If he had nothing to fear with respect to the robbery of Mr. Truman, which was doubtful, some other ugly secret was assuredly shut up in that bosom of his; but not so closely that some flashes of a disturbed conscience did not at times gleam through the chinks of his shrunk soul.

Forty-eight hours had not passed before it appeared certain that we had made no mistake in suspecting him and his accomplice Sheen of having eased Mr. Truman of his purse. One of the ten-pound Bank of England notes which had been stopped was paid into Sir Peter Pole's bank by Wingrove and Company, spirit merchants, and a highly respectable City firm. We received immediate notice from the bank ; and I found that Wingrove's town traveller had taken it in payment of Sheen, whose name appeared upon the back of the note, in the handwriting of the clerk, who said, but that I suspected to be an error, that Sheen, himself unable to write, had specially requested the agent to do so. At all events, that trick would not much avail. He no doubt believed that the numbers of the stolen notes were unknown ; but with true roguish cunning prepared for a defence by being able, should the note be stopped and traced to him, to prove that he himself had insisted that it should be set forth on the back of the note of whom and when the clerk had received it. Sheen must have known perfectly well that, if

not asked to do so, the clerk, a man of business, would have taken the common precaution of being able to identify the note as that received of Sheen for Wingrove and Co. The utterer of the stolen security would have to show how he obtained its possession, or the inference of guilt would be irresistible. Of a surety we had the child murderer on the hip at last.

Mr. George Perkins (Mr. Wingrove's clerk) went at once with me to Sheen's house. That person was at home; and to my surprise, said coolly, in answer to my intendedly staggering query, "Of whom did you receive the ten-pound Bank of England note you paid to this gentleman yesterday?"

"I received that same note of my friend Wilford. I gave him change for it—ten gold sovereigns."

"Of your friend Wilford? And pray where may that friend be met with just now?"

"At the Golden Cross, no doubt. He has not left this more than a quarter of an hour. Oh, it's no use trying to frighten me, my crowing cockerel of a Runner, about that same note. Bedad! if I had not been sure it was the *rale* thing, the divil a bit

would Mike Sheen have insisted upon having his own name wrote on the back of it. I should like mighty well to have a sackfull of them."

"This one will, I hope, provide you with board and lodging during the term of your natural life. Don't be covetous. And now please to come with us to the Golden Cross, Charing-cross; I must speak with your friend Wilford."

"With all the pleasure in life. I am ready."

The man's confident bearing puzzled me; yet the case seemed to be quite clear. Too much so. I should have been better pleased with a little dash of doubt; to have perceived some rotten twig upon which Sheen and his friend Wilford might be calculating upon to save themselves from destruction. The note was unquestionably one of those the numbers of which were known and advertised, and it was admittedly changed for Wilford by Sheen; both of whom, there could be no reasonable doubt, had seen the advertisement, and knew themselves to be suspected of the robbery! Curious! I did not feel so certain as at first of having bagged the game.

Mr. Truman was at the hotel, and him we first spoke with. He at once identified the note, and pointed out his initials, J. T., written very small, at one corner on the back. The waiter conducted us to Mr. Wilford's apartment. That individual, who was dining luxuriantly, seemed surprised, but not in the least alarmed, at seeing us, begged us to be seated, and blandly asked to be informed of the purport of such a visit.

"Sheen here," said I, "declares that he changed this note for you. Is that so?"

"Let me look at it, and I will tell you. Oh, I do not want you to part with its possession for one moment. I only wish to see the back. Yes," said Wilford, after examining the back of the note through a gold eye-glass; "yes, that is the note Sheen changed for me. There are two sets of initials on it; at least I suppose J. T. are initial letters; and mine, R. W., are written in yet tinier characters on the opposite corner. There is also, you observe, the name of William Williams written in full just above that of Mike Sheen."

"This is one of the notes of which this gentle-

man, Mr. Truman, was robbed the other evening in the pit passage of the Haymarket Theatre. You——”

“Excuse me, Mr. Officer—Clarke, I believe, is your name—excuse me, Mr. Clarke, but really that is a little too audacious a—a fib, to use a mild word. There really seems to be a conspiracy to involve me in some absurd charge of robbing this Mr. Truman. Permit me to tell you—and you also, Mr. Truman—to your face, that I was in possession of this note quite twenty-four hours before you lost, or pretended to lose, your purse in the crowd at the Haymarket playhouse.”

“That is an audacious lie!” exclaimed Mr. Truman, with heat. “An abominable, infamous lie! It was safe in my purse when I left the hotel for the theatre.”

“We shall soon see who is the liar,” said Wilford, rising and ringing the bell. It was answered by the head-waiter.

“Mr. Williams,” said Wilford, “please to look at that note in the officer’s hand, and say if you know anything about it?” Wilford’s tone and

manner, as he put the question, were bold enough ; but his glance was restless, eager, and he shifted his gold eye-glass from one hand to the other with nervous, impatient tremor.

“This note,” said Mr. William Williams, after a close and rather prolonged scrutiny of his own signature ; “this note appears to be—I have, indeed, no doubt it is—that which I changed for this gentleman, Mr. Truman, on the first day of his arrival here ; and not long afterwards, being myself in want of change, I obtained gold for it of this gentleman, Mr. Wilford. These letters, J. T., were on it when I gave Mr. Truman the change. He himself pointed them out to me. Both dates are correctly given in this memorandum-book.”

“It is false !” shouted Mr. Truman, in a towering rage. “I remember perfectly well that you gave me change for a ten-pound Bank of England note, but not this note, which I received—and kept separate, with six others, from the rest—at Child’s Bank. These seven notes were pinned together, with a private memorandum containing the

address of the person for whom, being in London, I changed the cheque."

The waiter, a very respectable person, shrugged his shoulders, quietly remarking that he had changed but one note for Mr. Truman, and this was the note. "My name is on the back; I cannot be mistaken. I have no more to say," added Mr. William Williams, "and have duties to discharge elsewhere."

"You can now appreciate the value of Mr. Truman's blustering assertions, which I have no doubt he would not have hesitated to confirm on oath. It is thus men's characters—lives—are often sworn away by unscrupulous, reckless ruffians!—to——"

"Do you dare call *me* a reckless ruffian?" roared Truman. "By the *deu* that made me, I have a mind to——"

"Keep the peace, Mr. Truman," interposed I. "In my own mind, there is not a shadow of doubt that you believed the note you changed with the waiter was not one of those you received at Child's. Such mistakes *will* sometimes occur.

Mr. Perkins had, I presume, better take the note?"

"Certainly not," exclaimed Mr. Truman, whose positiveness seemed to be confirmed rather than shaken by what he heard. He evidently believed that the waiter [was a co-conspirator with Sheen and Wilford. "I will not be swindled in this barefaced manner. I insist upon an investigation before a magistrate. I charge both Mr. Wilford and the murderer Sheen with felony; and have a mind to include waiter Williams in the charge."

"You will do so at your own peril," I remonstrated. "The charge will be dismissed at once."

"I also warn you," said Wilford; "but such fellows as you need no warning," he added, with a contemptuous laugh. "Braggarts and bullies almost invariably display a wise discretion when the pinch comes."

This taunt was unendurable; and was meant, I felt sure, to be unendurable by the choleric Sheffield gentleman, who fiercely insisted upon Sheen and Wilford being taken into custody.

"Since the 'gentleman' insists upon it," said Wilford, "you, Mr. Clarke, had better take us off to Bow-street without further delay. The magistrate is still sitting, I presume?"

"Yes; and the case will, I dare say, be heard and decided at once."

The case, such as it was, did not last more than ten minutes. After hearing the evidence of Mr. Williams, the magistrate dismissed it without hesitation; and, in doing so, administered a severe rebuke to Mr. Truman for giving people into custody upon so untenable a charge.

"A jury would," added the magistrate, "multct you in heavy damages for slander and false imprisonment."

This was pleasant hearing for the plundered man, who resolved to wash his hands at once and for ever of the detestable business. He was not permitted to so wash his hands very easily. Before he could leave town, where he was detained till he should receive an important letter from America, writs were served upon him at the instance of Wilford and Sheen, with whom he was

fain to compromise by the payment of one hundred pounds down, exclusive of costs, which could not, however, have amounted to more than a trifling sum. A rather dear visit to the Haymarket Theatre that !

This was not all. There really seemed no end to Mr. Truman's London troubles and perplexities. He sent for me in a great hurry one day, to inform me of a fresh misfortune that had befallen him. This was the new story :—Two letters from New York, reposted to him from Sheffield, and delivered at the bar of the hotel on the morning of the day he visited that infernal theatre, he could nowhere find. He remembered being in a hurry at the time, opening and reading them at the bar, and then thrusting them into his leathern purse or bag ; but his impression was, that upon returning, two or three hours afterwards, to the hotel, he had taken them out of his purse or bag, and locked them up in his portmanteau. There, however, they were not ; and it was possible they went with the bank-notes. That loss did not much signify, as the letters were of no use to any one but himself ;

but, as the Father of Mischief and Mystery would have it, the *letter* he had been waiting for, and which it was stated in one of the former letters from New York would contain the address of a certain lady resident in London, whom it was very important he should see, had been delivered that very morning at the bar, placed by the barmaid in the rack, and now could nowhere be found. It was, the young woman said, a ship-letter, and had been reposted at Sheffield. No question, therefore, that it was the one he had been waiting in London for. Its disappearance caused him to look for the two before received, and he had made the discovery that they also were missing.

Letters from New York! thought I. That is the place Sheen's friend Wilford reports himself to be last from. The fellow seems to be strangely mixed up with these losses.

"Did you observe, Mr. Truman," I said, aloud, "if any one saw you open and read the two first letters, and afterwards thrust them into your cash-bag?"

"I cannot remember that I did. Several per-

sons were passing to and fro. Ah ! yes, by Jove ! I do remember that that fellow Wilford, whom I did not then know by name, scarcely by sight, was close by, and himself reading a letter. But what of that, after all ? Letters are not bank-notes."

"True ; and these letters you say are of no use to any one but yourself?"

"Of no use whatever ; but the inconvenience of losing them—the last one especially—is great. I must write to New York for the lost address. It will be three months, perhaps more than that, before an answer can be received, and the affair required prompt attention."

"And you do not even know the lady's name. It is unfortunate ; but I do not see that anything can be done, police-wise, in the matter. Stay. I will try and quietly ascertain if Mr. Wilford has been seen about the bar this morning."

"The letter," said I, "addressed to Mr. Truman, and delivered at this bar, cannot be found, it seems ? It is very awkward."

"It *is* awkward," replied the bar-lady. "I

cannot imagine who can have got it; but it certainly could not have gone without hands."

"Do you remember who has been at the bar this morning?"

"At post time?"

"Yes."

"Several commercial gents. Mr. Wilford,—but he never misses being here when country letters are delivered. He himself had two American ship-letters this very morning. We have inquired of him, but he knows nothing about the missing one."

"Humph!"

The letter could *not* be found. There was no help for it. Mr. Truman wrote immediately to New York, and left for Sheffield the next morning, in very bad humour with the world in general and London in particular.

Within a fortnight, several of the other advertised notes turned up, which fact I instantly communicated to Mr. Truman. That much exasperated gentleman refused at once to have anything more to do with the abominable business. As for coming

up to London for the purpose of prosecuting the holders or passers of the stolen notes—which merely meant being bullied by magistrates and fleeced by attorneys—catch him doing so ! The robbers had got his money, and the devil give them joy of it !

I need hardly say that I hugely suspected Robert Wilford, not only of picking Mr. Truman's pocket, but of the abstraction of that gentleman's New York letters, some sinister use of which— notwithstanding Mr. Truman's assertion that they were of no value to any one but himself—I had little doubt such an ingenious gentleman could make.

Soon after Mr. Truman left London, Wilford shifted his quarters from the Golden Cross to the White Horse, Fetter-lane, but continued to pass much of his time at Sheen's, in low debauchery, guzzling, card and skittle-playing, &c. &c. His street appearance did not in the faintest degree indicate the man's habits. He was rather a handsome fellow ; always well and appropriately dressed ; and his carriage and manners, when upon his good behaviour, were those of a respectable, fairly-educated man of the world. Why on earth such a

man should seek companionship with Sheen was a strong stimulant to detective zeal, and I very soon transferred my attentions from Sheen to him. The contemned, the justly contemned publican was, I felt satisfied after a while, innocent of actual robbery in the Truman case, though he might have been compelled by inexorable circumstances to wink at his friend's crime and afterwards aid him in passing the plunder. Of this, however, I was by no means sure.

The potman, Peter Mings, and I—(Mings afterwards kept the Grapes, in St. Martin's-lane, or, rather, the Grapes kept him and a large progeny—a very decent fellow, by the way)—the potman and I were colleagues, in the same sense that a colonel and corporal are comrades, and he let me into a few of the Sheen-house secrets.

In the first place, Wilford was not going back to New York, whilst the relative of Sheen in that city was himself coming over. There were wheels within wheels, turning faster and faster, the potman said; and his opinion was that if something warn't done, and quickly too, to put a spcke in 'em, the

biggest blackguard of the lot, Wilford, would be safe to come uppermost.

By "the lot," my tapster friend meant Wilford, Sheen, and Amos Fletcher, Sheen's New York relative, who had arrived from the Empire City, and was lodging with Wilford at the White Horse, Fetter-lane.

Peter Mings having called at my lodgings to assure himself with his own eyes that my metamorphosis into a hackney coachman would pass muster, expressed intense admiration of the make-up. Totally impossible, he was quite satisfied, for anybody to suppose such a respectable old Jarvie could be Clarke, the young and uncommon downy Bow-street Runner. Five was the hour at which the party would want the coach, and I must be sure to be in good time, or he would have to get another conveyance, as dinner would be on the table at No. 12, Lowndes-square, a nobby place, at six exactly. I said there was no fear of my being late, and Peter went his way in high feather. Success in our little game, if the stakes in issue

were anything like the amount I believed them to be, would suffice to make him, with the brewer's and spirit merchant's help, landlord of the Grapes and husband of Susan, the pretty barmaid at the Crown, Newport Market.

Left alone, and having two hours good to spare, I, as a cautious general always should on the eve of a decisive battle, again carefully considered the field of action, and calculated the chances of victory or defeat. The position was a peculiar one. A haze hung over it which might, no question, unduly magnify the relative importance of some circumstances and obscure that of others.

It had come to my knowledge, entirely by the clever agency of Mings, that Robert Wilford and Amos Fletcher had been of late in the habit of visiting, at 12, Lowndes-square, Chelsea, a middle-aged widowed lady, of the name of Parkinson, who, with two nieces, lived there in very good style. So far Mings ; and even but so far, the information, collated with incidents already known to the reader, suggested matter for a hot (Detective) brain to work upon. But by working on my own hook, I

already knew something more. Mrs. Parkinson's head housemaid, Mary Saunders, who had once been in the service of Messrs. Swan and Edgar, Leicester-square, was, being an attractive girl, sweetheart to one of the assistants, Paul Corbyn, whom I had a sort of speaking acquaintance with, arising from having helped him out of a spree-squabble, which would else have caused his appearance on the Monday morning at Bow-street, instead of at his employers' establishment. Now Paul Corbyn was a young gent of "expectations;" that is, he was sole son and heir to a well-to-do hackney-coach proprietor in Berwick-street, Soho. I forget whether or not Shillibeer and buses were or were not then in existence. The old folk were averse to their son "demeaning" himself by taking a housemaid to wife, pretty as she might be. They had consequently refused to see Mary Saunders; a source of mortification to that damsel and irritation to Paul Corbyn, as he himself, over a social glass, had told me. This as usual awry course of true love led me, when spelling over, letter by letter, the Truman, Wilford, Sheen, and Fletcher puzzle,

to certain conclusions. One, which I imparted to Mings, was, that I should like to be hackney-coachman to the party when next they visited at 12, Lowndes-square; a matter easily arranged. Another possibility I did *not* communicate to Peter was, that I might convert Mary Saunders into a potent auxiliary in running the game to earth, supposing, of which I had very little doubt, that something in the way of legitimate sport should turn up. Paul Corbyn, I knew, never paid his personal services to his charmer except when it was her Sunday out. This would not be till the following Sunday week; and it being Monday when I was to first officiate as coachman, I had close upon a fortnight to play out any little subsidiary game. The progress of that game will explain itself.

Two splendid swells were Robert Wilford and Amos Fletcher, when dressed out in full fig for dinner at 12, Lowndes-square. "No. 12, Lowndes-square, Chelsea," said Mr. Wilford, in reply to the interrogative touch of my hat, as I closed the coach-door; "12, Lowndes-square, Chelsea; fourth

door on the right. Drive sharp; we are rather late." No sign, not the slightest, of recognition. "All right." Sheen, looking very sad and seedy, was standing at the door. He was evidently thrown out of the hunt.

My coach, by-the-bye, was a glass-coach, so called in those primitive times; and means a hired vehicle which no outward sign or figure denoted to be a hired vehicle; did not ply for casual hire, and was engaged for a day, afternoon, or evening, as the case might be. The regular hackney-coachmen, when so employed, donned a sort of neutral livery. I had done so.

The glass-coach was in the coachhouse, the horses carefully put up, and I, upon the invitation of the hospitable housekeeper, a crummy dame upon the shady side of fifty, was about sitting down to tea, when Mary Saunders came flouncing into the room, in a somewhat flushed, excited state: "The dinner, cook, must be put back *another* hour! First, six—next, seven—and now eight! We shall come to having dinner at midnight by and by. Them Passmores from Southampton are

arrived in town, and will be here not later than half-past seven. So, as I say, dinner is put off for them till eight o'clock. And what a lot there will be: I'm sure I and Anne shan't be able to wait upon them all, especially with Stephen laid up with the rheumatics! In fact, I never undertook to wait at table at all, or to dress the young ladies, though I don't so much mind that; but I'm fairly worn off my legs—I am, indeed!" This last paragraph was addressed confidentially to me, the house-keeper having bolted to see "cook" the moment she heard that dinner was again postponed. I improved the opportunity. (Mary was really a very nice girl. Paul Corbyn, my fine fellow, you might go further and fare worse.) This parenthesis was of course a mental one.

"Sarvants, miss, the very best of 'em, is imposed upon almost al'ays. Sarvice, miss, as I says to my son, who don't consider things as I does—not having so much experience you see, miss, of the world 'as we old 'uns have—'Sarvice, Paul,' says I, 'is no *heritage*.' No more it ain't, miss. Uncommon nice tea!"

“Have you a son of the name of Paul?” asked the highly-coloured damsel—Nature’s paint! it could not have been bought in Bond-street at any price — “have you a son of the name of Paul?”

“I have, miss,—wuss luck,—I was a goin’ to say;—but I wont — no, certainly not. He’ve a took up, miss, as I’ve heered by a friend who I put on the watch, with a sarvant-gal somewhere in Chelsea. Leastways, my friend supposes so, having met ’em together here three or four times on Sunday afternoons. A coarse-featured, squabby creetur, my friend says. Black hair, coarse as whip-cord, gipsy-skin, and greasy heels—I can’t abide greasy heels, in gals or ’osses—(Mary Saunders was fair as alabaster; her hair a silky auburn, her foot and ankle of the prettiest, neatest pattern). I *am* surprised at Paul. Excuse me, miss; I see you can’t make out why a stranger should talk to you about his son’s wagaries. Of course you can’t. The thing is, I was thinking that if so be it had been such a young ’ooman as you, now, that Paul Corbyn had took up with, I shouldn’t mind.”

“Do you—do you”—palpitated the damsel—the words upheaved from her sensitive bosom—
“do you live in Berwick-street, Soho?”

“We do indeed. Occupies all the Mews there, miss. Seven hacks and four glass coaches a’most al’ays goin’! Not a bad ketch, Paul.”

“Perhaps, Mr. Corbyn,” exclaimed the damsel, bridling, with a complacent glance at an opposite mirror, “perhaps, Mr. Corbyn, the young person—the—h-em—the servant whom your son keeps company with may not be the coarse sort of individual described by your friend. Quite the reverse, perhaps. How do you know,” she added, with a yet rosier blush and a merry giggle, “how do you know that he has not fallen in love with her himself? she being, it may be, pretty as I am. Now don’t,” she added, first glancing round to see that the coast continued clear, “don’t try to keep it up any longer. You are come to see Mary Saunders with your own eyes; and so—there!—and there!—and there!—Oh, I say! Good gracious! Did you ever?”

Upon my word, those daughter-in-law kisses—

"There ! there ! there !"—threw me for the moment quite off my balance, making me oblivious that I was between fifty and sixty. I recovered the sedate gravity of that age with some difficulty.

"Like son, like father, my dear. You shouldn't be surprised. It runs in the family. The old 'ooman, you'll find, wont be any harder to make it up with than Andrew Corbyn hisself. But *mum* must be the word—even to Paul, my dear, for a time—for various reasons. Only for a short time—say a fortnight."

I then explained that I had a double motive in coming to Lowndes-square in the character of one of my own coachmen. The first she had herself discovered ; the second was, that it behoved me to find out who the gentlemen really were I had drove down, and what their business really was with Mrs. Parkinson and her nieces.

"It's a secret, my dear," I added ; "and it's of great consequence I should get to the bottom of it. Very great consequence to you and Paul, my dear, also. If one on 'em aint a goin' to marry a

rich lady, as he gives out, I am booked for a heavy figure, I am."

"Borrowed money, eh? Dear me! But I don't think there's much doubt. I'm afraid Mr. Truman will marry——"

"Truman—Truman!" I blurted out. "What do you know about Mr. Truman?"

"How strange you talk. Wern't you asking about Mr. Truman, the youngest of the gents you drove down?—though there aint much difference, judging by looks, between him and Mr. Fletcher."

Truman! Ah, ah! I was fly in a moment. That slight glimpse beneath Master Wilford's cards fully explained the disappearance of the New York letters from the bar of the Golden Cross; but what particular game he was playing it was necessary to discover if I was to make sure of the odd trick.

"Mary," said I, "excuse my freedom. It seems to me that I have known you ever so long; that the parson must have said grace, and made you and Paul better and worse months ago. But this is it, my dear. I *must*—you shall know more of the

whys and the wherefores soon—I *must* find out all about these slippery coves, unbeknown to themselves, you understand.”

The reappearance of the housekeeper interrupted our colloquy.

“Mr. Harrison, the lawyer, is expected every minute,” said she. “You must get tea ready for him in the green-room. Mr. Harrison is one of the old school,” added the housekeeper, addressing me; “he takes dinner about one or two, and has only tea here when he comes about this time.”

“I knew there was something more than common going on to-day,” said Mary. “The dinner wasn’t put off till eight o’clock for the Passmores. Not a bit of it. Mr. Truman and his friend are in a hurry to get the settlements done, and I shouldn’t a bit wonder if the licences have been brought down to-day, and——”

“A still tongue shows a wise head,” interrupted the housekeeper, severely. “Least said is soonest mended. Always bear that in mind, particularly when a stranger is present.”

Mary, hearing that, rose hastily, and left the room with an air and look at me becoming an engaged young woman whose father-in-law that was soon to be occupied the whole of the mews in Berwick-street, Soho, and kept seven hackney and four glass coaches almost always going.

And here I may remark over my tea with the housekeeper, before Miss Mary Saunders returns, that I don't consider there was anything immoral, professionally speaking, in passing myself off as Andrew Corbyn. I was quite sure the real Andrew and his old 'ooman would not prove obdurate. My little *ruse* was merely affording the pretty damsel a foretaste of the good fortune, as she considered it, which awaited her in the near future. I must, however, admit that in a detective training school a professor of moral philosophy would be rather a hindrance than a help to the proficiency of the pupils.

"Mr. Sims"—my jarvie name—"Mr. Sims," said Mary, as she re-entered the room, "Mr. Truman wishes to speak with you. I will conduct you to him."

“Nothing of the kind, Mr. Corbyn,” said Mary, as soon as we were out of hearing; “Mr. Truman has not asked for you; but as he, Fletcher, Mrs. Parkinson, Harrison, the lawyer, and I suppose the young ladies, will be confabbing together presently in the breakfast-room, I thought you might like to hear, as I should myself, what they are up to.”

“My dear girl——”

“Don’t speak so loud, or better don’t speak at all, and tread softly.”

Mary Saunders led me through the breakfast or green-room, an apartment opening upon a conservatory through a door of stained glass. The chandelier was already lit, and no one in the thickly-shrubbed conservatory could possibly be seen from the room, whilst every object in the room would be seen distinctly visible to whoever was concealed there. By leaving the door ajar, as Mary and I ascertained by experiment, I should be able to hear every word—the slightest whisper—uttered within. The device was admirable. There was also a way out of the conservatory into the

garden—a great convenience—should such a movement on my part become desirable.

The important business which brought Mr. Harrison to 12, Lowndes-square occupied a considerable time, the hitch being a tearful, sobbing reluctance on the part of the nieces to sign certain documents laid before them. They appeared to be timid young persons—gentle, amiable, no doubt—but not at all handsome. The overbearing vehemence of Mrs. Parkinson finally prevailed: the papers were signed, sealed; which done, the Misses Benson retired. A supplementary deed was then produced, securing to Mrs. Parkinson seven thousand pounds, to be paid over to her in equal shares by Truman and Fletcher the day after their union with the nieces. Mrs. Parkinson, it also appeared, would soon change her name to that of Passmore.

The curtain had risen upon the last scene of the play. I held the conspirators in the hollow of my hand.

It was near two o'clock in the morning before

the merry party broke up. Pulling up at the door of the Bow-street police office, whither I had taken the liberty of driving Messrs. Wilford and Fletcher, who during the drive had been in riotous spirits, I exclaimed :

“ Now, gents, here we are, with friends to welcome us. Please to dismount.”

“ Eh ! What the devil ! ” exclaimed Wilford, starting up in terrible alarm. “ This is not Sheen’s ! ”

“ Not exactly. I thought a change of scene might be of service. Now, Mr. Wilford—now, Mr. Fletcher—no nonsense.”

The search of the persons and luggage of the culprits afforded more than sufficient evidence to convict them of a felonious conspiracy to obtain possession of the persons and property of Isabella and Catherine Benson. Those young persons (orphans) had been bequeathed about fifteen thousand pounds each, by Mr. Silas Benson, of New York, who had emigrated to America in early youth. Their aunt, Mrs. Parkinson, was appointed their guardian ; and the young ladies

were to be placed in possession of the legacies on the day they married with her consent. Wilford and Fletcher had both been in Mr. Silas Benson's employ, and by some means had made themselves perfectly aware of the disposition of his property and other particulars, the knowledge of which was essential to the successful carrying out of their nefarious scheme. They, for example, knew that a relative and partner of the deceased Benson, who was well acquainted with Mr. Truman, of Sheffield, intended writing to that gentleman, with whom the firm had had extensive business transactions, requesting him to call on Mrs. Parkinson, whose address he would not for a few days be able to obtain, and look after the interests of the two orphan girls. It was as Truman's son that Wilford, with the aid of the letters he purloined, successfully imposed himself and his friend Fletcher upon the aunt.

The licence which had been procured two or three days previously, authorized the union of Robert Truman, otherwise Robert Wilford, with Isabella Benson. The plot was frustrated but

just in time, and, as Mings admitted after the transportation of the two scoundrels, by information given him on the sly by Sheen, who, whilst they were at large, was afraid or ashamed to betray their plot.

Mary Saunders had not long to wait for a husband. The genuine Andrew Corbyn was so mightily tickled by the account which appeared in the papers—the young woman's own evidence as given before the magistrate—of the vivacious part he had been made to play in the affair, that he and his old 'ooman called the same day he read it to see her, took as fatherly a fancy to her as I had simulated, set his son Paul up in the drapery business, and himself gave him the pretty housemaid to wife. I was invited to the wedding, but was prevented from attending by a sudden call elsewhere. I frequently saw them afterwards, and am still friends with both, as well as with their sons, daughters, and grandchildren.

The only legal cognizance taken of Mrs. Parkinson's conduct in the matter was an application to the Court of Chancery to deprive her of the trust.

teeship of the nieces' fortunes. It was unopposed ; and Mr. Truman, senior, as suggested by their relative at New York, appointed in her stead.

I never directly again heard of either the Trumans or the Bensons, and cannot, therefore, positively say that either of the young ladies became a Mrs. Truman. I think I remember that when, many years after, I was passing through Sheffield, the landlord of the inn at which I stopped for a short time told me he thought the maiden name of one of the Mrs. Trumans was Benson, and that she had a maiden sister living with her.

MY FIRST TRIP ACROSS THE ATLANTIC.

THE attempted murder of his wife by William Jones, who kept a coffee-house in High-street, Marylebone, caused me to be hurried off on a sudden to Abergavenny, Monmouthshire. The woman—of whom Jones was justly jealous—ultimately, many will remember, recovered from the terrible injuries inflicted by the infuriated husband ; but at the time I left London in pursuit of the criminal her life was in imminent danger.

Jones was a native of Abergavenny, and from information—purposely misleading information—which reached the office, we were induced to believe that he had run to earth there, and might be found at his uncle's, a respectable tradesman, carrying on business in the High-street. Jones had not, however, been seen there ; and so far as he was

concerned, my journey was a bootless one. It was soon afterwards discovered that he had embarked at Plymouth, for America; and as his wife—a thoroughly bad woman—did not die, no further effort was made to capture him. My expedition to Monmouthshire had, however, important though remote results.

The month was March, the weather bitterly cold; and I was not a little pleased to find that, the second-class carriages being already filled when I arrived on the platform, the Company were compelled to accommodate me with a first-class seat.

Two other persons rode in the same carriage, the destination of both the same as mine—Abergavenny. One of them I knew to be Mr. Marsden, a “gentleman about town,” very respectably connected, once possessed of ample means long since squandered, and married to one of the most beautiful women I have ever seen. Mrs. Marsden I had taken to be nine or ten years younger than her husband, though his age could not much exceed five-and-thirty. He knew me well enough; but of

course did not condescend to any word or glance of recognition.

The other was a person of quite a different stamp. The snows of at least fifty winters had whitened his hair; but in other respects he showed but slight signs of advanced age, especially not by his tongue, which could scarcely have been more voluble at twenty. His incessant talk upon all conceivable subjects—the weather, politics, literature, theatres—was, however, saved from becoming insufferable, as his countenance was from absolute plainness, by its intellectual character. It was not long before I knew that he was a gentleman of the Press, a writer of books, and, if I did not misunderstand him, had written or concocted, whichever may be the right term, pantomimes for the stage—Mother Goose, Harlequin Hunchback, or some such nonsense. At all events, I knew soon after we passed Worcester that he was about to play a remarkable part—harlequin and pantaloon combined into one, ill-natured people might have said; our stately, select companion looked that remark plain enough, though he

did not venture to give it words—in a pantomime of real life.

I should state that the weather was, as I have said, exceedingly cold. The hilarious gentleman had drunk rather freely at Worcester of spirits and water.

“What sort of a place is Abergavenny?” I asked, as we reseated ourselves.

“Cannot say, sir. Never was within a hundred miles of it before in my life; perhaps never shall be again. I am even now merely bound there on, to me, a very interesting voyage of discovery.”

“Voyage of discovery! Discovery of what?”

“Of a widow. To ascertain, that is to say, by the sensible and true avouch of my own eyes, if a lady whom I knew and was very spooney about when she was fifteen, and I two or three and twenty, whom I have not seen since, nor heard of till very lately, sufficiently resembles that young girl to induce me, she consenting, to commit matrimony. If so, well; if not, it is but returning to London by the next train up. A sensible errand, eh?”

"I can hardly think so. I would lay odds you do not recognise each other!"

"What may be the widow's name?" asked Mr. Marsden, with a sneering laugh, speaking almost for the first time. "I know Abergavenny well; and may be able to end your suspense at once."

"The widow's name," was the prompt retort, in an entirely changed tone, "is not Fanny Morris; nor do I think Mr. Ernest Marsden can be so well acquainted with Abergavenny as I am with *him!*"

I was perfectly astounded at this speech, not having imagined that the "gentleman of the Press" knew even Mr. Marsden's name, much less that he was acquainted with the sad story of Fanny Morris. Marsden himself was equally astonished, darted at the speaker a look of fierce rage, and, for a moment, appeared about to assault him; he, however, restricted himself to a muttered curse, sank back in his seat, and did not utter another word during the journey.

"I may be partial and over-confident," continued the romantic traveller, handing me a miniature on

ivory ; “but I certainly think it possible that the face and form here represented may be found, after making a very large allowance for the wear and tear of even a quarter of a century, still worth looking at. What do *you* say?”

No doubt about it, if the limner had not grossly flattered her ! A very charming girl ! Sweet hazel eyes ; exquisitely chiselled nose and mouth ; bright, clear complexion ; flowing auburn tresses ; sylphlike, elastic figure ; the *ensemble* sparkling, glowing, waving in the light of at most sixteen golden summers, made up the very *beau ideal* of an English girl. The dominant expression of the face was that of a fresh, joyous vivacity—the freshness of a morning of spring, over which is beginning to steal the warmer light of earliest summer ; the vivacity that of a buoyant, delighted, and delighting spirit. I expressed myself in some such terms, much to the gratification of the elderly lover, who assured me that the painter had not done more than justice to his charming subject. “But surely,” exclaimed I, “those features are not unfamiliar to me. I have

seen, spoken to the lady—I feel sure of that—when she was, however, some eight or nine years older than when this portrait was painted. To be sure I did, in Dublin. Both the lady and her husband were chief witnesses in a case which you, Mr. Marsden, must remember well. The once much-talked-of Curzon trial !”

Marsden did not deign to reply, and little more was said till we reached Abergavenny ; the talking traveller, by way of change, and influenced I supposed by the sight of the portrait, subsiding into song—that of “ My pretty Jane, my dearest Jane,” which Sims Reeves has since rendered so popular ; humming away in a style that, but that I was kept awake by the necessity of stamping my feet and striking my arms smartly together to keep myself from freezing, would have droned me off to sleep in no time. A private carriage was waiting for Marsden, into which he immediately vanished and drove off. The fifty-year-old enthusiast, partially recovered from his “ Pretty Jane, ” but getting ; I plainly saw, terribly nervous as the deciding moment drew near, proceeded with me by ’bus to

the Angel Hotel. There I left him whilst I went to look after William Jones, with what success the reader already knows.

It was useless to remain in Abergavenny, so I determined to leave by the 10 A.M. train the next day. I felt some curiosity to ascertain how my travelling companion—(I did not know his name for some time afterwards, and I will now write it—Russell)—I felt some curiosity to ascertain how my travelling companion had fared with the widow.

“Is the gentleman,” I asked the servant, who brought me hot water, &c., in the morning—“is the gentleman who came with me last evening up yet?”

“O, yes, sir ; just coming down to breakfast.”

“Do you know if he returns to London this morning?”

“O, certainly not, sir. Bespoke bed and private room for a month, sir.”

“All right. Lay for two. I shall breakfast with my friend.”

I did not want to ask any further questions upon the interesting subject, as in less than two

minutes afterwards Russell was descending the stairs, singing at the top of his voice, "She's all my fancy painted her!"

"I have no occasion to ask," said I, reciprocating his jolly shake-hands when I entered the breakfast-room, "whether it's mizzling or matrimony! God's painting not brushed out yet, eh?"

"Improved, sir! Mellowed by time! That is to say—for I am not quite a superannuated fool—mellowed by time to suit my more advanced taste. But I have something to tell you. Marsden has a hunting-box here; not far from Llanover Park—seat of Sir Benjamin Hall, M.P. for Marylebone, you know—distant four or five miles from Abergavenny. There lives with him a lady, who passes for his wife; not a young woman either. My wife—no, no; what an ass I am!—the *widow* says she *was* a Mrs. Fotheringay. Ah, yes, she knows all about *her*. Mrs. F. was born in Queen's County, Ireland; and somewhere there her relations reside. Queer, don't you think? Why, the fellow seems to have as many wives as

Blue Beard had ! only don't kill 'em off like him. I suspect on account that Jack Ketch is not, as yet, an obsolete tradition in this country, unworthy of the enlightened nineteenth century."

I did not at the time attach much importance to Mr. Marsden having a wife, "not a young woman," residing with him at a shooting-box, a few miles distant from Abergavenny. Full eight years passed away ; when I was fain to send the subjoined advertisement to the *Times*, having made many fruitless inquiries previously to discover the whereabouts of the gentleman who travelled with me to Monmouthshire. It was certainly odd, as I afterwards reflected, that garrulous as he was, neither his own name nor that of the widow had slipped from his fluent tongue :—

"VERY IMPORTANT!—If the gentleman who, in the month of March, eight years ago, travelled from Paddington-station to Abergavenny, in a first-class carriage, with Mr. Clarke, a detective police-officer, and who himself was at the time bound upon a voyage of discovery—the discovery

of a widow—will send his address to the Magistrate's-office, Bow-street, Covent-garden, he may be able, it is believed, to render a sorely-beset lady an inestimable service."

This advertisement, upon which I, after all, placed but a shadowy reliance at the best, was repeated at least twenty times without effect. The circumstances which led to its insertion require to be set forth at some length.

I have said that Mr. Ernest Marsden's wife—his recognised wife—was one of the most beautiful women I have ever seen, and considerably younger than he. Also, that he had dissipated, in a wild course of life, the ample means, or nearly so, which he inherited. He contrived, however, to keep afloat for about three years after we travelled together to Abergavenny. By then his affairs had become utterly desperate; and he had no resource, if he would avoid practically perpetual imprisonment, but to attempt fighting his way through the Insolvency Court or to fly the country. The fell sergeant Death was, however, just as strict in his arrest,—a grave, the prison, from which another

fiat than that of an Insolvent tribunal could only release him. Attempting to cross over from Lymington, Hampshire, to the Isle of Wight, in an open boat with some boon companions, whilst a rough sea was on, the frail skiff capsized, and all embarked in it were drowned. It was mid-day when the accident occurred, and that none in the boat escaped, was seen by many persons on the Lymington beach. All the bodies were ultimately washed on shore,—every one horribly disfigured, and recognisable only by their clothes. That of Ernest Marsden was so identified. There could be no question as to *his* fate, as he had been seen to go into the boat by many persons. The news,—not, one would suppose, very bad news,—reached Mrs. Marsden at her father's house, Cranberry Lodge, Seven Oaks, Kent, where she had been residing for the previous two years. I am but imperfectly acquainted with the family history of the Davenants of Kent; but, as I understood the matter, Lucy Lambton, daughter of the Rev. George Lambton, was not esteemed a fitting match for his only nephew and heir, by Sir Richard

Davenant, of Elms Park,—a very wealthy bachelor-baronet. The young lady, though only rich in God-gifts, was as proud as Sir Richard himself, peremptorily declined the suit of young Davenant, who urged a private, clandestine marriage, and accepted the hand of Ernest Marsden—just then come into possession of a good estate in the neighbourhood of Cranberry Lodge. The uncle-baronet had been gathered to his fathers several years before the accident occurred off Lymington ; but his successor, Sir Henry Davenant, faithful to his first flame, was still unappropriated, unpromised, when that liberating catastrophe took place. A decent interval was allowed to elapse—quite sufficient to dry up the few natural tears the beautiful and still youthful widow may have shed—when Sir Henry again preferred his suit, and which, there being no hunks of an uncle in the way, was graciously accepted. Sir Henry lived but two years after his marriage. He was thrown from his horse at a fox hunt, and killed on the spot, leaving issue two sons, Henry and Charles, the last a posthumous child. The landed Davenant

estates were strictly entailed on the eldest son ; but there was a large amount of disposable property, which had been settled upon Lady Davenant, with remainder to the younger children, should she have any.

It is scarcely possible to imagine a more felicitous position than that of Lady Davenant. The world, with all which it inherits, was, in a practical sense, at her feet : the present, brilliant ! the future, bright, calm, cloudless ! Vanity of vanities : All *is* vanity, saith the preacher—and not only the inspired penman who traced the sacred text, but he who teacheth by examples which confront us at every turn of the strange, changeful road of life. And a more striking example than that afforded by Lady Davenant could hardly be found.

She was found one morning by her personal attendant, lying insensible on the carpet of her *boudoir*,—an open letter, which had been delivered at Elm Park a short time previously, held tightly in her clutched hand. Of course, proper restoratives were promptly applied, and it was not long before Lady Davenant was perfectly conscious that

she was suddenly hurled down from her high estate, into an abyss of degradation, misery, shame,—if shame can attach to those who, in intention, are wholly blameless.

The letter was from Captain Lambton, her brother, then serving with his regiment at Quebec, Lower Canada; and contained a frightful revelation. Ernest Marsden was alive—well; had called upon, spoken, and sought to make a bargain, as the price of remaining dead to the world, with the brother of Lady Davenant, so called,—of whose marriage with Sir Henry Davenant, and subsequent death of the young baronet, he professed to have only recently heard. The story he told was, that supposing himself followed to Lymington by a sheriff's officer, who might be lying in wait for him, he prevailed upon one of his friends to privately exchange clothes with him (his own dress being one of peculiar fashion), and embark with the others for Yarmouth. This would throw the officers, supposed to be on the look-out, off the scent; and if the counterfeit Ernest Marsden should be arrested, his detention would be a short one. So

agreed, so done ; the real Marsden leaving Lyington secretly, long before dawn, for Southampton, where he embarked for Havre de Grace, and finally found his way to the States and British America. Should his offer—a large sum down and a well-secured bouncing annuity—be refused, he would at once return to England, face and settle (through the Court) with his creditors, and insist upon his wife returning to cohabitation with him.

On the same day that Lady Davenant received her brother's letter, she wrote to her late father's solicitor, Mr. Ames, of Gray's Inn, requesting his immediate presence at Elms Park. He set off thither at once, and upon his return sent for me. It had chanced that I was once in professional communication with him, in regard to Fanny Morris, one of Marsden's victims, who had forced her way, in search of the seducer, into Mrs. Marsden's presence, expecting to meet him. The unhappy girl—mad, desperate—behaved so outrageously, that it was necessary to send for the police. Forcibly ejected from the house, and warned not to go there again, Fanny Morris con-

ceased herself in the neighbourhood till Marsden came home ; again went to the house, and with loud outcries, demanded to see, to speak with him. Thrust out—chased away by his order, given by him in her hearing—the ruined girl, about an hour afterwards, crawled, unobserved, to the front entrance ; knocked, rang, and, when the door opened, fell headlong into the hall. She had taken poison (laudanum), and came there to die. The dose was not, however, sufficiently powerful ; and, in a few days, she was sufficiently well to leave Sevenoaks, by coach for London, where it was said Marsden met and renewed his illicit connexion with her. I was employed by Mr. Ames, acting by direction of the Reverend Mr. Lambton, to ascertain the truth or falsehood of that report. I failed to do so. All that I could discover concerning her was that she had been met at the London coach-office by a highly respectable-looking middle-aged lady, with whom she went away in a cab. An advertisement procured me a meeting with the cabman—a quite useless one ; all he knew being that he drove the two females to the White Bear coach-office, Picca-

dilly, where he set them down. Whither or in what direction they then proceeded, though I persevered during several weeks, I was unable to ascertain. I convinced myself, however, and Mr. Ames, that Mr. Marsden was as ignorant of Fanny Morris's abode as ourselves.

"This is a very terrible business," said Mr. Ames, after placing in strictest confidence Lady Davenant's cruel position clearly before me; "and, as I fear, beyond remedy. But drowning men catch at straws; and remembering that some years ago, when we were talking over the Fanny Morris affair, you mentioned having heard that Marsden had a wife, or lived with a woman—not 'a gay person'—who passed for his wife, somewhere in Wales——"

"In Monmouthshire, near Abergavenny."

"Ah, yes! Remembering that, I say, it occurred to me that it was just possible the reckless scoundrel might have been already a husband when he espoused Miss Lambton, and that the woman living with him near Abergavenny was really his wife. Such a fellow would not be likely to cohabit in

obscurity with an ageing woman unless bound to her by some tie which could not be broken or cast off without peril to *himself*. At all events, the chance of discovering that to be the case must not be neglected, and I confide in you to make the necessary inquiries."

I agreed to do so ; set off the next day for Abergavenny ; on my return sent the advertisement, already given, to the *Times* ; left for Ireland ; scoured the Queen's County in vain search of Fotheringay ; and was disposed to utterly despair of success, when light broke in upon the gloom from an unexpected quarter.

"One Fanny Morris," said my landlady, "who has been to the office in Bow-street, wishes to see you."

"Fanny Morris ! Say I will be with her in less than two twos."

Fanny Morris, indeed ! But what a wonderful improvement for the better in her appearance. She was not finely dressed, as when I had last seen her—her clothes were indeed of the homeliest quality and make ; but she was neatness itself, and the wild, haggard look, grimly visible through thickest paint,

was replaced by the glow of health and contentment—not, however, untinged with a shade of sadness. I very heartily congratulated her.

“I have been rescued from destruction,” she said, “by compassionate friends; one of whom you yourself, I find by an advertisement which I first saw about three hours ago only, are desirous of meeting with—Mr. Russell.”

“Mr. Russell !”

“Yes; the gentleman who travelled with you and Marsden to Abergavenny when he was bound there on a voyage of discovery. I have heard him and ‘the Widow’—Mrs. Russell, of course—laugh over the story many times. I have been in their service from the day of their marriage. Mr. Russell knew me when I was a ballet-dancer at Drury-lane; and when the news of my sin and shame reached him through the newspapers, he prevailed upon his maiden sister to visit me at Sevenoaks, and offer me a home in her house as housemaid. I yielded to her entreaties with reluctance, and bless God every day of my life for giving me the grace to do so.”

"How is it that Mr. and Mrs. Russell have not seen the advertisement?"

"For the very sufficient reason that they have been travelling in France, Germany, and other countries during the last four months, and did not, I suppose, often see the *Times*. They will arrive home, No. 27, Great Ormond-street, to-morrow. I had a letter yesterday to say so. Mr. Russell will, I am sure, be glad to see and assist you in any way. When shall I say you will call?"

"About noon on the day after to-morrow, if that hour will be convenient."

Fanny Morris had no doubt that it would.

"By-the-bye, Mr. Russell is quite satisfied, I suppose, with the result of his voyage of discovery?"

"He would be a queer man if he were not satisfied with one of the best wives in the world. I need hardly say," added Fanny Morris, with a laugh, "that she is neither so young nor so pretty as the portrait her husband showed you; but for all that, there are hundreds of women not half her age, and far from uncomely, who would give something to

see her face and figure in the glass when they themselves look into it. Good-bye! I shall see you the day after to-morrow."

The appearance of Mr. Russell, who received me very kindly, was scarcely changed from when I parted with him at the Angel, Abergavenny. Marriage with the widow had evidently agreed with him.

With respect to the immediate business in hand, he had no doubt that his wife could afford me valuable information. She would be there in a few minutes.

Mrs. Russell was really a very pleasant, graceful person; and making due allowance for the effect of time and the rose-coloured spectacles tinted by youthful admiration through which he saw her, the husband's enthusiasm did not seem so extravagant as, when first witnessed, I thought it to be.

With respect to the lady who was living with Mr. Marsden, near Abergavenny, Mrs. Russell was strongly of opinion that she was really his wife, although for some reason or other, she herself had

been heard to say she had only been promised marriage, but that it had never been solemnized. She (Mrs. Russell) had known Julia Fotheringay—she was born in Kerry, not Queen's County—when she was one of the most beautiful girls in Dublin, and the least likely person in the world to throw herself away. But she (Mrs. Russell) could adduce the strongest moral proof that Miss Fotheringay was the legal wife of Ernest Marsden, and that she could not have been more than eighteen when they were married—many years, of course, before Marsden wooed the present Lady Davenant. Miss Fotheringay fell ill of an acute disease in Dublin when Marsden was absent, it was said, in England. Her life was despaired of; and believing herself to be dying, she solemnly declared to Mrs. Russell herself, who had been sedulously attentive during her illness, that she *was* married to Ernest Marsden, and though she had promised to keep the truth concealed from the world till circumstances should justify her, in a prudential sense, in making it known to the world, she held herself absolved, when life was passing, of the promise, and should

disclose the truth, if but for the sake of her relatives.

“She was proceeding with her confession, as it may be called,” added Mrs. Russell, “when the doctors entered and interrupted it. I left the room, intending to return immediately, but a message from my own home, stating that one of my daughters, Janette, had been suddenly taken ill, having arrived, I left the house; and before I again saw Miss Fotheringay, or rather Mrs. Marsden, her disorder had taken a favourable turn. All danger was over; and with the dread of death had passed away the lady’s anxiety to speak the truth in respect of her marriage. In reply to my angry expostulation, she coolly remarked that she must have been either dreaming or delirious if she really had made such a statement, as she was not yet Ernest Marsden’s wife. I never saw her to speak with her afterwards. My husband did frequently; and he was as convinced as myself of the reality of the marriage.”

“Is it known if this lady is still alive, and where she may be found?”

“Oh, yes; I received a letter from Canada not very long since, from an old friend, who knew her as well as I did. ‘You will be more grieved than surprised,’ writes my friend, ‘to hear that our old acquaintance, Julia Fotheringay, is an inmate of the Beaufort Lunatic Asylum, near Quebec, where she passes under the name of Mrs. Lee. I saw, but was not allowed to speak with her, she being then suffering under an access of her terrible malady, which is, however, more mopish, melancholy, in its character than violent. She did appear to know me. Dr. Douglas, chief physician to the establishment, has strong hope that she will finally recover, her lucid intervals being much more frequent and of longer duration than formerly.’”

I thanked Mr. and Mrs. Russell for the valuable information—invaluable to Lady Davenant I hoped it would prove—and at once hastened away to lay my budget of news before Mr. Ames. He was mightily pleased, and, for the first time, really hoped we should be able to trip up Marsden’s heels, and at a moment, too, that he fancied himself planted firmly on a rock.

The next mail packet which left the port of London conveyed me to New York, whence I made my way without accident to Quebec. I immediately sought out and had an interview with Captain Lambton, in the citadel; and in a few minutes we were dashing through Palace Gate in a caleche, on the road to Beaufort, near which village the Lower Canada Lunatic Asylum was situated. Mr. Wakeham, the warder, conducted us to Dr. Douglas, who, after listening with sympathetic interest to Captain Lambton, promised that every assistance in his power should be afforded us to defeat the machinations of such a villain as Marsden appeared to be. "He," said Dr. Douglas, "placed Mrs. Lee here as his sister, and has great influence over her—the influence of terror when actually in her presence; but I believe, from certain circumstances, that she writhes under the moral thralldom to which she is compelled to submit, and would willingly break her chains. Let me warn you, however, that in his presence she will say or unsay anything at his bidding. The poor lady—a very beautiful woman she must have been—is now quite

sane. Her "brother" has sent notice that he intends removing her, and he may be here for that purpose at any moment. You must act with promptitude and vigour I will conduct you to her."

The unfortunate lady listened attentively to Captain Lambton and myself; appeared to feel sympathy and compassion for Lady Davenant, and something like abhorrence of Marsden; but the dominant, master feeling was evidently fear of that person. She would say nothing, not a word, whilst he could possibly avenge himself upon her. "He would kill me," she piteously exclaimed, "he would kill me; but if I found myself really in England (where, if I was, he dare not come), I would tell all—all."

Finding her immovable in that resolve, we left, to concert measures for carrying her off; and were dismayed to find that Marsden had, during our interview with his sister, sent a written notice that he should be at the asylum, with a carriage to fetch her away, in three or four hours at the latest.

That stroke, sudden and unexpected as it was, could be successfully parried. I explained how

to Captain Lambton, and handed him over the funds I had been entrusted with to be immediately available in such an eventuality. A note was despatched from the citadel, as soon as we reached it, from Captain Lambton, which informed Marsden that the parties in England had finally agreed to his terms, and had sent over the first instalment of the money stipulated for. Mr. Marsden was, therefore, requested to call within an hour at the citadel, accompanied by his confidential *homme d'affaires*, as he (Captain Lambton) was about to start for Montreal, and might be some weeks absent. Meanwhile I was busy with a Quebec magistrate, securing the attendance of two Quebec police officers.

The papers, drawn up as guardedly as possible, were signed and sealed on both sides. One thousand pounds in Bank of England notes were handed over to Marsden, in exchange for which he gave his receipt. That done, one only ceremony remained to be performed, the signal for which was given by Captain Lambton's whistle.

"Your name," said my Canadian assistant, "is, I believe, Marsden—Ernest Marsden? Very good. Well, I shall take you to jail for robbing this gentleman of one thousand pounds, good moneys, by lies—false pretences."

"By lies—false pretences!" shouted Marsden. "What the devil do you mean, Lambton? Are you mad, that you seek to ruin your own sister—*my wife!*"

"Not your wife at all, Mr. Marsden," said I. How the fellow started at the sound of my voice, not having before noticed me. "Never was! You married Julia Fotheringay years before you went to church with the lady you speak of; and your real wife is now at the Beaufort Lunatic Asylum, confined under the name of Lee—'your sister,' Lee."

"Ah, my friend," said the Quebec officer, "it is no use to swear, and kick, and fight! You must come with us to jail. Ha, ha! you're caught!—charming! Come along; or must we have soldiers to prick you with bayonets, eh?"

Believing that his wife had really confessed everything, Marsden, as soon as he could sufficiently control his maddening rage, offered, through his *homme d'affaires*, to make a reasonable confession of his guilt, upon condition of not being prosecuted in Canada, nor dragged off to England to be there tried for bigamy. His terms were accepted; our success was complete. He and Julia Fotheringay had been married at a country church in Galway seven years before he led Lucy Lambton to the desecrated altar of God.

It was well we had not relied too implicitly upon his wife's help. We had not left the Asylum an hour when a carriage sent by Marsden arrived; in which she was driven, nothing loth, to his lodgings in Quebec, where, it is needless to say, she did not find him. Of course, good care was taken that she should hold no communication with the prisoner till he had settled finally with us.

SIR WILLIAM AND LADY DEVEREUX.

I VERY early acquired a habit of transcribing in durable ink, before I retired to rest, such pencil memoranda as I had jotted down during the day, of singular incidents which I had myself observed or been told of. Standing alone, these were without apparent significance, but might thereafter prove to be invaluable links in a tangled chain of circumstance. The date, locality, the names of informants or witnesses were strictly recorded. In ninety-nine cases of a hundred I simply had my trouble for my pains; but the hundredth, as in the case I am about to relate, abundantly compensated the lost labour.

The following sensation paragraph appeared in the columns of the *Morning Post*, in May, 1837: "The fashionable world is in a state of excitement

relative to the sudden separation of Sir William Devereux and his lady, whose marriage was solemnized at St. James's Church, less than three weeks ago. The newly-wedded pair were spending the bridal month at the baronet's seat, Westlands, Derbyshire, when the inexplicable event took place. One, and the most constant, rumour is that the baronet has been smitten with lunacy; and this would be a probable conjecture were it not that the lady has returned to her friends. A short time will, no doubt, clear up the mystery."

The writer in the *Post* miscalculated the time which the unravelment of the mystery would consume. At least a month passed after the appearance of the newspaper paragraph before the following note reached Colonel Rowan, Chief Commissioner of Metropolitan Police, into which body the Bow-street Runners had been absorbed: "Sir William Devereux presents his compliments to Colonel Rowan, and will esteem it a signal favour if he could be permitted to avail himself of the services of an intelligent and active detective officer. Sir

William read an account in the papers at the time of the resolute and skilful conduct on the part of an officer, named Clarke, in a case of alleged bigamy. If that person could be spared, Sir William would gladly engage, and amply reward, his services."

This note was handed to me, with orders to place myself at the disposal of the baronet, should I find that the affair in which I was called to act fell within the legitimate range of a detective's duties.

There was no room, I found, for doubt upon the point. I had frequently seen Sir William Devereux—a vigorous, handsome man, about, I judged, thirty years of age; and now, when I waited upon him in Belgrave-square, I found an emaciated invalid, on the high road and at full gallop to consumption. I was fortunate by my replies to his first testing questions, as he considered them, to confirm the favourable opinion he had formed from newspaper reports of my detective capabilities, and he at once gave me his entire confidence. A precious tangled, knotty yarn it

was which he spun out and expected me to unravel !

Sir William had succeeded to the baronetcy and entailed estates only about a twelvemonth previously, at the death of his father, and as a consequence of the decease, not very long before, of his elder brother. He had, however, been pretty well off for a younger son, but nothing like sufficiently so to win the consent of Earl Verigrand to his union with the Lady Violet, youngest and loveliest of the noble lord's three lovely daughters, whose portraits have appeared in every Book of Beauty published. Mr. William Devereux's possible succession to the baronetcy and the estates was too problematical, though the elder brother was of a weakly constitution, to permit such an idea to be entertained for a moment, though the Lady Violet herself was favourably inclined, and Mr. William Devereux loved *her* with passionate devotion. The noble father's coolly-contemptuous refusal of his beautiful daughter's hand—as I understood it to have been—drove the disappointed suitor distracted for a time ; during which access of mania,

he must needs marry, just to show how little he cared after all—the first sharp pang over—for the passing disappointment. Lavinia Meriton — a second or third cousin of the Lady Violet's—and for some reason or other, not very clearly explained to me, at bitter feud with the Verigrand family—Lavinia Meriton was an orphan—poor, proud, very handsome, swayed by strong passions, and *bitterly* ambitious. She lived with an aunt—a lady of moderate means; and had a brother, two or three years older than herself, who had gone out to India at a very early age, and had risen to the grade of captain in the Honourable Company's Service some time before Lavinia Meriton became Mrs. William Devereux.

The marriage was an unhappy one. The husband and wife had no real regard for each other; and a formal separation was under discussion when, by the death of the elder brother, William Devereux became presumptive heir to the baronetcy and entailed estates. A final separation was then suddenly brought about; not by the agency of lawyers, but by the fiat of Fate.

Captain Meriton returned to England upon short leave of absence; and of course visited his sister and her husband, by whom he was courteously received. He was a tall, handsome man; bronzed by Indian suns, and a soldier of service—as a deep, though not disfiguring, sword-scar across his forehead testified. It was the yachting season; and Mr. Devereux, who was fond of aquatics, was staying at the Royal Hotel, Ryde, Isle of Wight, with his wife. It was natural that the brother and sister should be much together—often exclusively so—considering that the terms of the proposed separation were, as before stated, under discussion. It appeared strange, to those who knew how fiercely ambitious was the wife, that the brilliant future opened up by the elder son's death did not in the least abate her anxiety to forthwith carry out the arrangement. She seldom condescended to mention the baronetcy; never directly, that he remembered, to her husband.

She was probably not so reserved upon the subject to her brother or to Mademoiselle Saint Aubin,

her French attendant, and, since the marriage, confidential companion and friend.

Captain Meriton and Mrs. Devereux were frequently out boating together ; no other person with them. One fine but sultry afternoon, the intense heat of which was forebodeful of an electric storm, the brother and sister proceeded in a light skiff upon the Southampton Water. There were several other boats in company at starting, but these returned to Cowes, as the sky became overcast and the wind rose. Not the slight skiff—managed, however, with skill by Captain Meriton. When near Calshot Castle—off which several yachts (that of Mr. Fleming, Member for South Hants, one of them) were anchored—Captain Meriton beached his boat, and with his companion went on shore ; no doubt, it was supposed, to seek temporary shelter from a sharp scud of rain which came down at the time. That passed away, they were seen to re-embark—though it was blowing in violent, fitful gusts, and the skiff carried considerably too much canvas. Darkness, too, had suddenly fallen—darkness seamed, lit up, by vivid flashes of lightning,

by which Captain Meriton's boat was seen to capsize when not more than four or five hundred yards from the shore. She turned completely bottom upwards; and after a few moments of painful suspense, and whilst yet Mrs. Devereux's scream of mortal agony sounded in the ears of the spectators, Captain Meriton was observed to rise, and with much effort clamber up and cling on to the boat's bottom. Mrs. Devereux sank at once. Captain Meriton was saved by the yacht boats, which had immediately hastened to the rescue; but Mrs. Devereux was not seen again, nor was the body ever found.

The storm, which lasted several hours, was a violent one, and the corpse had no doubt been whirled by the raging waves out into the English Channel, through the Needles Passage. Captain Meriton was much affected by his sister's shocking, untimely death; and well he might be, it having been caused by his own almost criminal rashness. He returned to India much earlier than he had intended.

Sixteen months after the death of his first wife,

Sir William Devereux, with the full consent of Earl Verigrand, married the Lady Violet. The wedding was a splendid one, and, as the *Morning Post* stated, "the happy pair left immediately for the baronet's seat, Westlands, Derbyshire." There, after a deccrous interval had passed, they were joined by all or nearly all the bride's family, with other distinguished friends of both sexes. A very brilliant company, no doubt; Sir William himself the gayest of the gay.

Suddenly thunder fell, and all was confusion, terror, dismay. The family and guests were assembled or assembling in the drawing-room, previous to dinner, when Sir William, white as stone, his hair dishevelled, his eyes a-blaze, and clutching a letter, it seemed, in his right hand, staggered into the room. Meeting the alarmed gaze of his beautiful wife, he uttered a loud cry of anguish, horror, and fell prone on the floor.

The letter, which had no date or signature, contained these lines:—

"SIR WILLIAM DEVEREUX, — Lavinia, Lady Devereux, was *not* drowned. She escaped as by

miracle, and is at this moment alive and well. She does not, however, wish to intrude her unwelcome presence amongst the gay bridal party assembled at Westlands, nor expose her amiable, triumphant cousin, the Lady Violet, to public disgrace and shame. You, Sir William, may, if you will, keep the fact of Lady Devereux's existence a secret from the Lady Violet—from the world—which you and she know to be in such cases so cruelly *moqueur*—pitiless. But secrecy, as you will easily understand, will be costly—very costly. What of that? Tens of thousands are but as dust in the balance, weighed against the honour, the peace of the noble Verigrands—the honour, peace of mind, perhaps the life, of a young, beautiful, beloved bride. The person charged to deliver this letter will enter into negotiations upon equitable terms. Do not forget that one rash word could not be recalled—the consequence be irretrievable.”

“That infamous paper, scrawled in a character unknown to me,” said Sir William, “was placed in my hand by a Mademoiselle Saint Aubin, lady’s-

maid to my first wife, as I was hastening in from the park to dress for dinner. I had no sooner glanced at it, than, turning to the woman—not in alarm, not in the least—in anger, contempt, rage, I asked if she knew the consequences to herself of attempting to obtain money by such barefaced lying, so audacious a fabrication. ‘You do not believe,’ said the brazen French devil; ‘ah, well! I must show you, then. Come.’ She led the way, at a smart pace, out of the park to a small adjoining coppice, on the other side of which is a turnpike-road. I followed mechanically. It was getting quite dusk, I must tell you. She entered the coppice, with me close at her heels; for I fancied she meant to run off, and I was resolved that she should not. On the roadside of the coppice we came suddenly upon a light phaeton, in which was seated a lady, thickly veiled. ‘Sir William is incredulous, my lady,’ said the woman, in French. ‘It is imperative, therefore, that he should see his wife.’ The person in the carriage lifted the veil, and unless I was mocked by some illusion, some trick,—I have read of such things—that person was

Lavinia, my first wife. I was spell-bound, rooted to the earth with astonishment, dismay ; and before I could move a step, utter a word, the French-woman had sprung into the phaeton, snatched the reins from the other, and driven off at the swiftest pace of a fleet, powerful horse. It was impossible to overtake them, and they have not been heard of since."

"Not heard of since ! Strange ! "Inquiries after them have of course been made?"

"Yes ; eager, incessant inquiries ; wholly without result. It is the sword of Damocles, suspended over my head. It will kill my wife, my innocent, beautiful wife. It *has* killed her morally. . . ." exclaimed the baronet, with groaning passion, and pacing the apartment to and fro, with feeble steps. "That I should have blighted that fair, young, joyous life ! Destroyed one, to save whom I would have cheerfully accepted death for myself !"

"Do not be too ready, Sir William, to accept a sinister solution of this strange mystery. I, too, have heard of cleverly-managed illusions of the

kind. It was dusk, you say; and possibly a chance likeness may have suggested the trick, and——”

“No, no! Clarke,” interrupted the greatly-shaken baronet. “I have tried to hug that hope; vainly tried. If I stand here, I saw her: saw my former wife, in the body, with my own bodily eyes. There was—could be—no illusion, spectral or otherwise.”

“I have no faith in spectres, believe me. Yet what peg of probability is there to hang a doubt of your first lady’s death upon? In the alleged case of bigamy you read of in the newspapers, there was a palpable motive for the pretence of having been drowned: but in this instance, *why* should Mrs. Devereux wish it to be believed that she had so perished? What, in any conceivable eventuality, could she gain by it? Then, again, Captain Meriton, her brother, *must* have either been *particeps criminis*——”

“There! there again!” interrupted the baronet. “I have not told you that the man who accompanied Mrs. Devereux was not her brother,—not

Captain Meriton. That gentleman arrived from India only last week. I have seen him. He has not been in England before, since he left it a mere boy."

"Not Mrs. Devereux's brother! *Not* Captain Meriton! Her paramour, you evidently suspect——,"

"I do! I do! O, she was, is a woman who would thrust aside, or overleap any obstacle that opposed the gratification of her passions, whether of love or hate."

"Yes; but excuse me, Sir William, the very fact that you and your lady were about to be legally separated; that it was agreed she should have a splendid income as soon as you succeeded to the baronetcy,—a handsome one meanwhile,—cuts away the ground under that supposition. It has nothing whatever to support it. The lady and her supposed paramour would have everything to lose—nothing whatever to gain—by getting up a false report of Mrs. Devereux's death."

"True! true! The mystery is inscrutable. Nothing can, I see, be done. Sending for you was

but as the futile snatching of the drowning man at a straw."

"I do not abandon hope so easily. The conviction grows upon me, that a chance likeness discovered by the Frenchwoman must have suggested the attempt to impose upon and rob you. It failed, and the accomplices have not been seen or heard of since. Yet, why should she have first showed you the pretended Mrs. Devereux, and immediately scampered off? That certainly gives one pause."

"The final blow is suspended only. The vile woman revels in the slow torture she inflicts."

"She hated with a bitter hate, I understood you to say, the Lady Violet?"

"Yes; with bitter, rancorous hate. She hated me also; but I might have given some provocation. That angel none! none!"

"Well, Sir William Devereux," said I, rising to take leave, "I am now in possession of all particulars, so far as they are known to you. I will sleep upon the matter, and to-morrow give you my candid opinion as to whether any good result may be hoped for through my exertions. One moment,

Sir William. There is one important item which must be jotted down in my notes. Do you know if the French lady's-maid, Mademoiselle Saint Aubin, has any acquaintances in London?"

"I do not know. Some of the servants may."

"Possibly; but we must not inquire too hastily of them. They themselves may be the woman's friendly acquaintances. Do you happen to be aware of where in France the woman was born, or where she has relatives?"

"Yes; Amiens, or the immediate neighbourhood, I am pretty sure."

"The pretended brother was an Englishman?"

"I think so, decidedly. O yes; his speech was that of an educated English gentleman."

I then went away; meditated quietly at home all I heard, and could come to no other conclusion than that an impudent, barefaced imposition upon Sir William Devereux's credulity had been attempted, and failed. Failed, that is, of what I supposed could only be its real purpose—that of extorting money. It had not failed in destroying the happiness, unless proof could be obtained of

the attempted imposture, of Sir William and Lady Devereux. To obtain that proof would, I feared, be very difficult. Would my diary of remarkable incidents throw any light upon the subject? The drowning had taken place on the 8th of August, 1835. I would turn to the entries (if any there were) referring to that date, or near it. By Jove! Here is a flash of light!—"Being at Mr. Nightingale's house, in the New Forest, on the 19th of September, 1835, on special business, heard of a curious circumstance. John Coombes, one of the under-gardeners, an intelligent lad, being in the forest, not very far from Calshot Castle, on the 8th of August, late in the afternoon, and when it was tempestuous dark, he himself having got under shelter of trees out of the rain, saw a lady creeping slily along through the forest, looking every way to see if she was followed. That, at least, was the young man's impression. Her clothes were so heavy with wet (she had a cap but no bonnet) that they clung to her body. Coombes' curiosity being roused, he stealthily followed the lady till she came to an out-of-the-way spot, where she

stopped, looked for a light spade concealed under a bush, took it up, and began digging a hole in the ground. As soon as it was large enough for her purpose, she began stripping off her clothes. The lad's modesty was, however, in no danger of being shocked, as beneath the female habiliments were a Guernsey close-fitting flannel frock and flannel leggings, such as seamen wear. First burying the woman's clothing, and covering the spot over with bushes, the person next pulled out from the place where the spade had been concealed, a bundle, containing a round blue jacket, canvas trousers, and tarpaulin hat; arrayed in which, he stood confessed a sinewy young man, and a sailor. He then went off, taking the spade with him. When he had been some time gone, Coombes raked out the clothes, and took them home. They consisted of a blue silk dress, a silk shawl of a peculiar pattern, and a lace cap; the whole saturated with *sea-water*. The Nightingale family being at the time on a visit in the north of England, no stir was made in the matter. The gardeners concluded that some lark had been forward; the clothes were sold to a tra-

velling pedlar, the money was spent in drink; and by the merest chance the matter was mentioned in my presence. I questioned Coombes pretty sharply. He did not know, he said, even by sight, the sailor who secreted the clothes, and should not recognise him. This I suspected to be a falsehood. But, it not being likely that anything more would be elicited, I let the subject drop; and left the house shortly afterwards, on my way back to London."

Thus far my diary. Now, if I had heard or read of Mrs. Devereux having been drowned near that spot, and on the day named, the 8th of August, and the coincidence of place and date had occurred to my mind, I should certainly not have let the matter drop. It is likely, however, that I had *not* read of the accident, or that if I had, it had passed from my memory.

This was certainly striking a very promising trail; which, however, promised only to confirm Sir William Devereux's worst fears: that it was some diabolical device, for which no adequate motive could be assigned except utter insanity of hate for

the Lady Violet—who, Mrs. Devereux might fairly conclude, would marry Sir William were she supposed to be dead.

Still it was my duty to state to Sir William Devereux what I had found by the entry in my diary to have taken place, and take his final instructions as to whether I should follow up the investigation. He was greatly agitated by this fresh proof, as it seemed to be, that his former wife was alive ; but still determined to discover the whole truth, if possible, and bring the conspirators to justice, if it could be done.

It was not many hours before I was with John Coombes, and obtained an admission from him that he *did* know the young sailor by sight (*only by sight*) who buried the clothes ; that he was a Portsmouth man, and might be found almost any day on Common Hard. He (Coombes) had seen him there about a fortnight after the clothes were sold—and he (Coombes) should not have known where to look for him before—in company with a swarthy, well-dressed looking man.

“Did you notice a scar on his forehead?”

No, he did not; having only glimpsed at him for a moment.

At all events, Coombes could go with me to the Common Hard. Once having found the sailor, I could question him myself.

“That’s he!—that’s he!” exclaimed Coombes; “the chap in a striped shirt, talking to the landlord of the Greyhound. They’re going away together.”

“All right; and you may go away for the present. I shall know where to find you.”

The chap in a striped shirt was a lithe young sailor, of about the medium height, strolling with its landlord (Skinner) towards the Greyhound, a low public-house on the Hard. I followed close after them, and overheard the landlord address his companion as “Charley” and “Trump.” Was Trump a real surname or a *sobriquet* indicative of game qualities? Desirous of ascertaining before opening my game, I harked back for a few minutes. Coombes had told me the young fellow was a waterman, and, addressing

a weather-beaten tar lounging about the Hard, I said, "Pray, which is Charles Trump's boat?"

"Charley Trump's boat," said the ancient mariner; "that's one on 'em," pointing to a gaily painted wherry. "He's got two now."

"Has he, though? Then he must have got on wonderful since I first knew him."

"I should think he have, mister. Fellows of his sort often do, though not always for a long spell. If you want Charley Trump," added the old man, "you are pretty sure to find him at the Greyhound; he mostly lives there since he's been in luck."

Trump was sitting alone in a small parlour, with a pot of beer before him. First taking his moral dimensions with as much accuracy as my visional callipers were capable of, I said, with purposed suddenness, "Charles Trump, you are wanted. I am a London police officer."

"Eh! what the devil!" cried he, starting up. "A London police officer! Well, what then?"

"You will know 'what then' presently. But don't you go into fits before your time. How about

Mrs. Devereux, the lady whose clothes you buried in the New Forest, not very far from Calshot, on the 8th of August last year. Ah! that licks you, my lad! I have been some time running you to earth, but you are safely bagged at last."

"Go to the devil with your 'bagged!' What have I done?"

"You have committed a robbery, that is certain—possibly murder. If I were to offer an opinion, I should say the probability is that you did commit murder as well as robbery. You need not, however, confess to me that the unfortunate lady was flung *alive* upon the beach by the waves. Now, then, leave off staring as if you had seen Mrs. Devereux's ghost; settle for your beer and come along with me. Yes, Charley Trump, willingly or unwillingly, you must come along with me. If you are as sensible a chap as one look in that tell-tale face—dingy as it is—shows you are cunning, it may not go so hard with you. Come."

We proceeded to a house in the not-far-off vicinity, where we could talk without interruption or risk of being overheard.

"Now, then, Mr. Police-officer, what is it you want to know?" said Trump, in a sullenly-savage tone, and endeavouring to rally his shaken courage.

"All *you* know about the lady we were speaking of."

"Which is precious little. I wish it was less."

"A proper wish, but entertained too late. The immediate question is, will you make a clean breast of it, on the chance—only the chance, mind—that, if by doing so you further the ends of justice, your own share in the business, if it be not a very heinous one, will be mercifully dealt with. Remember, however, that I make no promise; have, indeed, no power to do so."

"And if I choose to keep my tongue between my teeth—how then?"

"Simply that it will be my duty to immediately take you before a magistrate, and charge you with the wilful murder of Mrs. Devereux, whose clothes you unquestionably stole."

"Wilful murder of Mrs. Devereux!" stammered the sailor, trembling in every limb. That arrow,

aimed at a venture, went very near, if it did not actually hit, a vital part. "Wilful murder of Mrs. Devereux ! That's all fudge. The lady is alive, and I've no doubt quite well, at this very moment."

"That may be, Mr. Trump ; but it will require much better proof than your bare word. Only the bringing forward of the lady alive and well would suffice. Let me clearly describe your position. It can be proved that you were in possession of the missing lady's clothes very shortly after she was supposed to be drowned. What money she had about her person may never be known—except, perhaps, from your own confession to the jail chaplain. Pray don't interrupt. The possession of, or concealment of, the clothes is an ugly fact—a very ugly fact. Mrs. Devereux's French maid will prove that about noon on the 8th of August her mistress left the Royal Hotel, Ryde, in the blue silk dress and the Indian pattern shawl——"

"What, what !" exclaimed Trump, fierce as fire ; "do you mean that the Frenchwoman has turned round upon me ? But no, no ; it can't be possible."

"That's about the size of it, Trump, whether it be possible or not. But time's precious. Will you 'peach,' taking your chance, or go before a magistrate at once? I give you just ten minutes to make up your mind."

"I suppose," said Trump, after very brief silence, "I suppose it will be better to tell you all I know. This is it. Lieutenant Jameson was once second lieutenant on a gun-brig in which I served as cabin boy and his servant. He fell in with me on the *Hard* here last year, in the month of July. He was passing under the name of Meriton—being, he said, out of sight on account of debt. He was also after an old sweetheart of his, whose brute of a husband—a Mr. Devereux—used her shameful, kept her in constant fear of her life. The plan settled upon was to pretend she was drowned. Then they would be sure to get clear off, as no pursuit would be attempted. I waited and waited on the shores of the Solent and Southampton Water days and days," glibly went on Trump, his long-conned lesson surging clearly up in his memory, "and at last a lucky chance favoured

the scheme. On the 8th of August Captain Meriton, as he called himself, ran his boat on shore, near Calshot Castle. Out stepped Mrs. Devereux; and as soon as she reached cover, stripped off her clothes, and dressed herself, with things brought in the boat, as a country wench, and went off in the direction of Hythe. I put on the lady's fine things—there was a bonnet with feathers and a thick veil, but they were lost—went into the boat, which Meriton immediately shoved off and capsized; that was easy enough done, not too far from the shore. I could swim like a duck. Diving at once, I easily contrived to reach a concealing indentation of the shore, without showing more than a portion of my head above the waves. The bonnet, of course, I had cast off. That,” concluded Trump, “is about the sum total of it, as far as I am concerned; and I don't see that I have done anything particularly dreadful.”

“Don't you? I do. You have learned your story well by heart. ‘Concealing indentation of the shore!’ Where did you pick up such fine

lingo as that? Upon Common Hard? There, it's of no use trying to gammon me! Captain Meriton cooked that cock-and-bull story, and crammed you with it! Where is *he* to be found?"

"I know no more than you; perhaps not quite so much."

"You have papers about you. The end of a black pocket-book is sticking out of your side-pocket. I must examine the contents. Must I summon assistance? It is within call!" And I placed a whistle to my lips.

"Take it," said Trump, throwing the pocket-book savagely down upon the table. "There's nothing there about Mrs. Devereux and Mr. Meriton."

"We shall see. Please to move away from the door, whilst I look over the papers. You would be recaptured in three minutes, or less, did you attempt to bolt; but I like to do business in a quiet way."

"Well," he growled out between his teeth, as he moved up towards the fireplace, "this is devilish

pretty treatment—this is—for just helping a gentleman to run away with a lady—she being willing ; and the clothes given me ! What will they make out to be robbery and murder next, I wonder ?”

“ Here is your pocket-book,” said I. “ I retain only this scrap of paper.” The scrap was part of an old letter, addressed to Mrs. Devereux, Ryde, Isle of Wight ; the post-mark was Bermondsey ; the post-date, July 24 of the preceding year ; and in a corner were the initials C. D. The “ contents” part of the letter were gone ; but in the inside of the mutilated cover was written, in a different hand from the address, “ Lieutenant Jameson, care of Madame Saint Aubin, Rue St. Jacques, Amiens.”

“ Damnation !” burst involuntarily from Trump. “ I forgot——” He paused, grinding his teeth together, to keep in the self-betraying words.

“ You forgot this scrap of paper was in your pocket-book ! Where did you get it ?”

“ Found it in the lady’s purse,” was the sullen reply, after the question had been three or four

times repeated, "along with her money, which I was allowed to keep."

"Two fresh lies in a breath! But what are they amongst so many? Well, now I have the address, I don't see that I shall for the present want you any longer. I must see you to-morrow though. We will start for France together."

I then left. Trump must have seen me pass the window, as if I was going to Common Hard. Instead of that, I was on my way to the post-office. Exhibiting the warrant with which I was armed to the postmaster, I directed him to detain any letter addressed to "Lieutenant Jameson, care of Madame Saint Aubin, Rue St. Jacques, Amiens." "Jameson was an Englishman," I explained, "charged with capital felony; and the sailor who, it was believed, would write and post the letter was in the same predicament, and virtually in custody—he being closely watched by two officers of the Portsmouth police." The postmaster, as he was in duty bound, promised compliance, and I left.

It was pretty certain that Trump would seize the

first opportunity of writing to his patron and accomplice, warning him that active energies were on foot, and that, by an unlucky oversight, his address in France was known. Such a letter would, in all probability, lead to important disclosures.

I was not mistaken. The letter, which was fairly written and correctly spelled, Trump himself posted in less than half-an-hour after I left him. It ran thus: "'Ware hawks, lieutenant. The infernal London police are giving chase in your wake, and that of others. Me they have taken into custody, and let go again for a while. It has set my head spinning like a top. They talk something about robbery *and murder*; *but that is all nonsense, of course*. Unfortunately, the police have got your address. I didn't tell the unboiled lobster that, though born in England, your mother was a Frenchwoman—a Saint Aubin. I shall be staunch, depend upon it, to the last. Dumb and gritty as stone. C. T."

The same evening Charles Trump was locked up, charged with stealing from the person several

articles of dress, the property of Sir William Devereux, Baronet. The next morning he was remanded, at my instance, by the magistrate, for a fortnight; and I, without loss of time, proceeded to make inquiries at the Royal Hotel, Ryde.

There was a new landlord and landlady; but several of the servants remembered Mr. (now Sir William) Devereux, his lady, and Captain Meriton (Mrs. Devereux's brother) very well. One fact, not mentioned by Sir William when instructing me, came up:—Mrs. Devereux and her brother left Ryde, and were absent from the Wight more than a week; returning to the hotel only about four days, or five, previous to the catastrophe. After her return, Mrs. Devereux complained of indisposition—at least, her French attendant did for her—and kept close to her bedroom, waited upon only by the lady's-maid, and seen occasionally by Captain Meriton. She had no medical advice; and the day [previous to the accident, Mademoiselle Saint Aubin reported her to be much better—quite recovered,

in fact. Her husband, I found, was but rarely at the Ryde hotel—his time being chiefly spent at Cowes. At about noon, on the day of the accident a close fly was ordered up to the door; in which Mrs. Devereux, who was very strikingly dressed and wore a thick veil, drove off with Captain Meriton. This was about all I could hear in the house; but when leaving it, "Boots" said, in a sort of confidential "aside," that he had a few words to say about the business I was upon. "This is it, sir:—Missus, you see, don't like to have any talk about the ladies and gents that come here, which may get into the papers; so this is between ourselves. But I'm not quite sure as it was Madame Devereux that went out that day in the fly with Captain Meriton—springing into it, too, like a four-year-old, and she ill as was said. She—if it were she—must have had a curious fancy of wearing sailor's underclothes. He dress caught in the fly-step, you see, and hitched up the gown; I said nothing—of course not—not even that I thought, swift as she hurried out, that she had grown all at once two or three inches taller."

I thanked the man, slipped a half-crown into his hand, and bade him keep dark with everybody but me.

The mystery was thickening, deepening. I could not at all see my way through it. One thing certainly seemed, through all the imbroglio, to be getting perfectly clear — that Madame Devereux had not been drowned; was, as Trump asserted, alive and well at that moment. Yet, if that were so, why did the sailor tremble and turn pale when I threatened to charge him with the wilful murder of the missing lady? Then, again, the words in the intercepted letter to Lieutenant Jameson: “They talk of robbery *and murder*; *but that is all nonsense, of course.*” The last nine words were thickly underlined — as if to give emphatic utterance to the writer’s apprehension that in that direction lay the real peril. Well, patience, perseverance might solve as great a mystery.

Before leaving Portsmouth, I called upon the governor of the prison where Trump was caged, and learned, to my great chagrin, that a letter

written by the prisoner to Lieutenant Jameson, and submitted, according to the usual routine, to the governor, had been posted the previous day. It certainly, to persons unacquainted with the circumstances, would have seemed an innocent epistle enough, one even which it was the duty of the authorities to forward without delay. I read the official copy:—

“To Lieutenant Jameson, at Madame St. Aubin’s,
Rue de Derrière, Amiens, France.

“Respected Sir,—One who served with you several years in the *Alacrity* gun-brig, and whom, in consideration of some small service rendered to you on the West India station, you promised to befriend if he should ever require your aid, has fallen into trouble. It is endeavoured to make it appear that I and a Captain Meriton are implicated in the disappearance of a Mrs. Devereux. I am as innocent as the babe unborn; but the London police are storming heaven and earth, it seems to me, to arrest everybody that ever knew the lady, especially those who visited her at

about the time she was drowned, of all of whom the officers who arrested me boasted they had the addresses—some residing abroad. I do not quite understand it, sir; but I am told that if I cannot employ a lawyer, I shall be kept in prison God knows how long before the truth comes out. Sir, it happens just now that I am very short of money, and have no dependence but upon your well-known generosity.

“If, sir, *upon receipt of this you could leave Amiens*, so as to be certain of being here on the first day of hearing, all would be right, as you could prove, if I remember rightly, that on the 8th of August last year I was in attendance upon you at Torbay. But this perhaps is asking too great a favour. I will only add, that *what is done, to be worth anything, must be done quickly*.

“Your grateful servant,

“CHARLES TRUMP,”

“To whom please to direct under cover to ———, Esq., Governor of Portsmouth Jail.”

What an infernal baulk! The clever rascal

knew through the tattling folly of one of the Portsmouth officers that his first letter to Lieutenant Jameson had been intercepted ; and this second one was the artful dodger's device for warning his accomplice to "'ware hawks," through the agency, one may say, of the prison authorities themselves.

The letter was skilfully penned, the underscoring as I have given it, and Lieutenant Jameson would perfectly understand that it would be wise to make himself scarce before "the London police"—there being a treaty of extradition not long before negotiated—pounced upon him at Amiens. And that letter would reach Amiens, be delivered twenty-four hours at least before I could possibly be there. Confound it !

Regrets are always useless ; and I, delayed only by the necessity of proper credentials, started for Amiens.

It was easy to find Madame Saint Aubin ; easier to perceive that she expected and was serenely prepared for my visit.

"Oh, yes, monsieur ! My daughter Julie saw you speaking this morning to M. le Normand, the

commissary of police, a cousin of ours. You wish to speak with my daughter. Nothing more reasonable. Julie, *ma fille*," continued the lady, really a very intelligent, comely dame, with enormous *plaques* of gold hung, *à la Normand*, from her ears; "Julie, *ma fille*, the Monsieur Anglais Clarke, representative of Sieur Villiyam Devereux—(Devereux being a French name was decently pronounced)—wishes to see you."

I spoke French pretty well, understood it better.

Mademoiselle Julie Saint Aubin presented herself with the easy assurance, the perfect *à plomb* of all Frenchwomen that I have ever seen, above the very lowest class.

After a few quickly-got-over common-place courtesies, I said—

"Mademoiselle Saint Aubin, I have come to Amiens to make inquiries concerning Madame Devereux, whose servant you were, I believe, for several years——"

"Servant!" interrupted mademoiselle, colouring and bridling. "Madame Devereux was my *friend*; but let that pass, *c'est égal*!"

"To make inquiries concerning Madame Devereux. I am invested with authority, you will please to understand, to make those inquiries. I also wish to see M. le Lieutenant Jameson."

"You are unfortunate, monsieur; Madame Devereux is in her grave."

"How, mademoiselle! Madame Devereux in her grave? Did you not, a very short time since, accompany her to Oaks Park, and show her to Sir William Devereux?"

"Quite true; you are perfectly exact. It is since that Madame Devereux died, in this very house. Her grave is in the cemetery of St. Jacques. She died, poor lady, of a broken heart. As to M. le Lieutenant Jameson, he has, for a time at least, left France. He is my cousin, monsieur must understand. There is—you may or may not be aware—French blood in his veins."

"I have heard so, mademoiselle; but that does not concern me. It is very desirable to clear up all doubt concerning Madame Devereux. I am here for that purpose. I feel confident, mademoiselle, that you could, if so pleased, substitute cer-

tainty for suspense, and I really do not understand why you should not do so."

"It would—it will be—an afflictive certainty, monsieur, to your patron, Sir William, and the Lady Violet Verigrand. Nevertheless, it is necessary that the truth should be spoken. The story told you by that poor faithful Trump is in the main correct. But he was a mere tool. Lieutenant Jameson, my cousin, is a very handsome person, a man à *bonnes fortunes*, you understand. He was audacious. By my means he obtained an introduction to Madame Devereux before she was married, *bien entendu*. There was passion on both sides—imprudence. Monsieur will understand. All this was, as I thought, known only to me, Mademoiselle Lavinia, and my cousin. He rejoined his ship. Many letters passed—deeply compromising letters, as it proved, for Mademoiselle Lavinia—which, had I known of, would, I think, have induced me to dissuade her from marrying Monsieur (now Sir William) Devereux. I do not, however, suppose that I could have dissuaded her. Her passions were fierce, exalted.

She must have had *le feu Français* in her veins; and she knew that the Lady Violet was attached to Mr. Devereux—the Lady Violet, whom she hated with a deadly bitterness I could give no expression to! The marriage, as you know, took place. It was an unhappy one. Madame Devereux hated her husband; her whole soul was my cousin's. He came to England; the intimacy was renewed—he passing for her brother, Captain Meriton. The idea of a separation between the husband and wife assumed a settled form. Madame urged it on; and the scheme would no doubt have succeeded, with my zealous help,—(I do not pretend to superfine morality, Monsieur Police-officer),—when a shocking *contretemps* upset it. Madame's secret—her *liason* with my cousin—was known to another person, a relative of hers; a young lady with whom she had exchanged girlish confidences. That person, whom it is unnecessary to name, made an imprudent marriage (in a different sense from that of Madame Devereux), and the husband, fallen into insolvency, demanded a very heavy price to keep silent till the deed of separation was completed.

Very well. That sum, large as it was, would have been paid, had it not come to our knowledge that he, believing—foolishly believing—that Lavinia and my cousin had been married (legally married,—not merely *par amour*), was resolved, after getting possession of the sum stipulated for, to acquaint Sir William, *before* the treaty of separation was irrevocably sealed; to entitle himself to a yet greater money-payment from the baronet—he was not then a baronet, it is true—by the disclosure of all he knew, and believed he knew. What was to be done? There was a choice of difficulties. Certainly, had it come to Sir William's knowledge (it is as well to name him by his present title) that his wife had been the paramour—was living in actual adultery with my cousin, the lieutenant, passing himself off under the name of Meriton—he would have whistled her off without a shilling; and the English law would have justified him, we were told, in doing so. We had to do with an implacable foe. Finally, the scheme revealed to you, under duress, by Trump, was resorted to. Madame supposed to be drowned, our enemy was disarmed.

There were means of making terms with him, I must tell you, supposing he had no great temptation to babble. Besides, and above all, Madame gloated over this thought: That the Lady Violet would marry the supposed widower; and that she (Lavinia) would burst upon her, and, in the full blaze of her splendour, trample the spurious Lady Devereux into dust! That was not exactly my cousin's game. He—(we are children of Voltaire, monsieur,—believing, more or less, only in that which we see—can be sure of; a misfortune, perhaps, but a fact nevertheless)—he (my cousin), I was saying, had another game. He believed that he might make a fine market of Sir William after he should have married the woman he adored, by offering to conceal for ever from the world that the true Lady Devereux still lived. I was the agent selected to carry out—to consummate—that design. Sir William's scepticism, his impetuosity baffled us. I myself, knowing something of your English laws, got frightened. I and Lady Devereux returned to Amiens. Her health gave way; and about three weeks since she died,

in this house, as I have told you. *Voilà*, monsieur, is the whole story, in its broad outline. You may spare comment."

"It has run off your tongue, mademoiselle," I replied, with a sneer I could not wholly repress, "very fluently. Can you give me the name and address of the relative, or the husband of the relative (Madame Devereux's relative), whose impertinent interference spoiled your cousin's first game?"

"I will *not* give you that information; certainly not."

"Perhaps mademoiselle will condescend to say why—with what object in view—she has favoured me so far?"

"My faith!—the object is very direct—simple. If Sir William Devereux (one of the richest of your rich English *aristocrats*) will *purchase* the secret of his wife's existence after his marriage with the Lady Violet Verigrand, it may be his, and will be inviolably kept. To satisfy their own consciences," added Mademoiselle Julie, with a mocking laugh, "the baronet and Lady Violet can now

be really married privately; the expected infant will be legitimatized, and all be well. And please to understand, Monsieur le Police-officer, that we do not undertake to furnish proof—*legal proof*—that Madame Devereux is even now dead, except we—(Oh! *parbleu!* I speak for myself as well as for my cousin Edouard)—are liberally arranged with. What I have said about her death is, of course, nothing—mere gossip—bavardage, unsupported by proof.”

It could not be denied that I had to fight Sir William's battle with antagonists very cunning of fence. But their assault, opposed to a practised hand like mine, would have been more likely to be successful if it had been less flashy. Besides, there were so many incongruities—so much three-volume-novel nonsense in the story Mademoiselle Julie had told without pausing to take breath, that I was not for one moment bamboozled. It was just as likely to be true that Madame Devereux was alive at that moment as at any time after Sir William's marriage with the Lady Violet.

"I am," said I, "but a very humble intermediary in this matter ; but, in reporting what has passed between us, mademoiselle, it will be necessary, if 'a transaction' is to be arrived at, that I should know what price is demanded for *proving* the death of Lady Devereux about three weeks since?"

"O! as to that," said Madame Saint Aubin, speaking for the first time, "nothing unreasonable will be insisted upon by either Julie or Edouard. There must be consideration on both sides, and good faith on both sides. Let Sir William propose. If the offer be reasonable, it will be accepted—I answer for that; and also, I repeat, good faith will be kept."

Little more was said, and I left,—promising they might expect to hear from me,—in a state of deep perplexity. In what a confusing labyrinth of audacious lying, transparent absurdity with subterfuge, had I got involved! Had Mrs. Devereux been drowned or not? Was it Mrs. Devereux who, with the Demoiselle Saint Aubin, was seen at Oaks Park? And was Mrs. or Lady Devereux alive

or dead? I could not decide. All three were open questions.

Sir William Devereux listened to my narrative in gloomy silence. Proof that his wife died a few weeks previously—even if such proofs were forthcoming—availed nothing. The Lady Violet's life would not be saved by that. Perhaps she was unduly sensitive. It might be so. The earl himself and her sisters would perhaps be of that opinion. Sir William would not give the Saint Aubins a guinea! "Enter into an arrangement with them! Never! by G—, never!"

I thought Sir William's intellect was giving way; and after reaching home, carefully examined my hand, to see if all my trump cards had been played. How about that cover of a letter addressed to Mrs. Devereux, at] the Royal Hotel, Ryde, marked 25th of July, Bermondsey, and having the initials "C. D." in the corner? That stone, not a promising one certainly, was still unturned; and there might be something under it, and it would be merely the loss of a few shillings did

nothing (which was most likely)] come of it; so, having recourse to a favourite expedient of mine, I sent the following advertisement to the *Times* :—“ If C. D., who, on the 24th of July last year, posted, or caused to be posted, in Bermondsey, a letter, addressed ‘ Mrs. Devereux, Royal Hotel, Ryde, Isle of Wight,’ will communicate with Scotland-yard, he will much oblige.”

The next day, the following note came to hand :—“ The Reverend Christopher Doyle sent a letter to Mrs. Devereux—with whom, however, he had no acquaintance, and has never seen—on the 24th of July last year. It was posted in Bermondsey, and directed to the Royal Hotel, Ryde.—St. George’s Catholic Church.”

“ All I have to tell you,” said the Reverend Christopher Doyle, “ is this. I was summoned to attend a young woman calling herself Mrs. Lorimer, who was known to be dying at—stop, I have the number of the street in my diary—‘ Mrs. Lorimer, believed to be dying, at No. 17, South-street, Bermondsey.’ She was known to be a

fallen woman, and was still (though emaciated by want and disease) remarkably beautiful. She was in want of the commonest necessaries. She told me (not in confession) that she was the natural daughter of —, and sister by blood to Mrs. Devereux, with whom she had been once on terms of intimacy. They were as like, people said, as two peas. Mrs. Devereux had, however, cast her off. Still, if any one of character—whose word she could believe—wrote, stating that she (her own father's child) was dying for want of common necessaries, it was probable that help—too late help, it might be—would be afforded. I wrote to Mrs. Devereux. She, accompanied by a gentleman, hurried, as I was told, to London; saw Mrs. Lorimer—but too late to save her. I did *not* (as I told you) see Mrs. Devereux. Her blood-sister, Mrs. Lorimer, I saw a few days afterwards, in her coffin; and I myself celebrated the rites of the Church over her grave. That is all I have to communicate respecting the unfortunate woman.”

I thanked the reverend gentleman, and directed my steps to No. 17, South-street, Bermondsey.

It was a large house, full of gay lodgers. The owners or renters of the place fought very shy of my questions; but, at last, by dint of both promises and threats, I managed to wring out of them that a Mrs. Lorimer, a handsome young woman, did lodge in the house at about the time mentioned; had been seized with small-pox; was visited by the Rev. Mr. Doyle, a Catholic priest; died; and had been buried by him. They (the renters) had not liked to talk much about it at the time, for fear of alarming the other lodgers and visitors. Besides, Mrs. Lorimer, pretty nearly up to the time of her seizure, always paid well, and boasted of grand friends. Sure enough, two of those friends, a lady and gentleman, did come to see her a few days before she died; the lady "the very image of Mrs. Lorimer" the woman said—"twin-sisters could not be more alike." That was, before she had the small-pox, of course. The lady and gentleman went away, before the funeral took place, in a cab together. There seemed to have been a row between them.

"Would a fellow get anything now," asked the

black-browed, gallows-bird-looking landlord, "if he showed where the lady might be any day dropped upon?"

"Yes! twenty sovereigns, down on the nail!"

"I'm your man, Mr. Officer. She lives in a pretty little place at Camberwell. I seed her there not a week ago."

"You are the very fellow I have been looking for, a long time. You must go with me; and, first, to Belgrave-square."

My object in going to Belgrave-square was to obtain the attendance of some one who knew Sir William Devereux's first wife. That was easily managed; and all three left for Camberwell.

The cab stopped (by direction of the landlord of No. 17, South-street, who was seated on the box) at the gate of a neat little villa. Out we hurried, entered the front garden without ceremony, walked up, and knocked at the villa door. Before it could be opened, a lady and gentleman looked out of the parlour window, to see who knocked so loudly. The female face was a remarkably handsome one;

the gentleman's had a deep white scar across his swarthy forehead.

"Good!" exclaimed Sir William's servant, whom we had brought with us; "Good! my master's first wife—Mrs. Devereux!"

The door opened at the instant, and we were in the presence of the lady and gentleman.

"That is Mrs. Lorimer, as was dead and buried!" exclaimed 'No. 17, South-street'—"now I see her close."

"And the lady aint my master's first wife," said Sir William's servant, "now I look at her. But wonderful alike, though—wonderful!"

"What is the meaning of this insolent intrusion?" exclaimed the gentleman, with but mock effrontery of voice and manner.

"It means, Lieutenant Jameson, *alias* Captain Meriton, that you are my prisoner! I have a warrant for your apprehension."

"Must matters be pushed to extremity, Mr. Clarke?" asked Lieutenant Jameson—recovering, after a lengthened pause, from the state of coma, one might almost say, into which the suddenness

of the catastrophe had thrown him. "Is it too late to come to an understanding—an arrangement?"

"I cannot say that it is, or is not, too late. If you and this lady choose to volunteer any statement the truth of which is proveable, I will listen and give you my opinion after hearing it. I can promise nothing more."

"Be it so. The game is clearly up, I perceive. We can speak privately?"

"Sir William Devereux's servant must hear what you have to say. You," said I, addressing 'No. 17, South-street,' "may go and keep company with the cabman."

The lieutenant (he had long since been dismissed the Royal Service) and Mrs. Lorimer were perfectly luminous—eminently satisfactory. There *was* some truth in the cooked narratives of Trump and Mademoiselle Saint Aubin. There had been a guilty *liason* between Jameson and the first wife of Sir William, before marriage; and this was the reason why the criminal wife was so eager for a legal separation. Within a few days

of the hoped-for consummation of her wishes, the letter was received from the Reverend Christopher Doyle. Mrs. Lorimer, as she called herself, was known to have letters from Mrs. Devereux, more or less compromising; which it was desirable to prevent falling into the hands of strangers.

When Mrs. Devereux and her paramour arrived at South-street, Bermondsey, Mrs. Lorimer's disease had taken a favourable turn—there was no longer any danger—but Mrs. Devereux, a woman of full habit, was almost instantly stricken down by the terrible malady. So rapidly did fatal symptoms supervene, that she died within forty-eight hours. The remarkable likeness of the two blood-sisters, no doubt, suggested the expedient—which must, however, have required great ingenuity to successfully carry it out—of substituting one woman for the other.

Mrs. Lorimer lent herself—she candidly confessed—readily to the fraud, tempted by the promises made to her; and the strange device was

hit upon of hiring Charles Trump to personate the deceased lady at the Ryde hotel, and get pretendedly drowned, in her name. Sir William Devereux was sure to marry the Lady Violet. By clever contrivance, aided by Mrs. Lorimer's resemblance to his first wife, he might be made to pay dearly for the conspirators' silence. The chance was, at all events, the only one left, and was worth trying for. The game was not, in my opinion, played so skilfully as it might have been. Still, had Sir William yielded—criminally yielded—as hundreds of men would have done, to the first threat, and agreed (believing he had actually seen his former wife "with his own bodily eyes"), it must have succeeded.

There was no prosecution of the guilty parties. All that Sir William Devereux required was irrefragible proof of the death, and the time of the death, of his first wife. That was obtained in over-measure ; the frail woman's shame was concealed from the world, and the *Morning Post* was enabled to announce that the report of the separation of Sir William and Lady

Devereux originated in an entire misconception. Nothing of the kind had really taken place. In a few years it was forgotten by all but a very few that such a report had ever been in circulation.

JAMES HARGRAVE, THE BARRISTER.

JAMES HARGRAVE and I were lads at school together, and fast friends. He was very intelligent—full, brimfull of spirit—and far superior to me as a scholar. When I left school to commence my noviciate in Bow-street, our severance was for many years complete. We occasionally passed each other in the streets; but the recognition, when it took place, was, on both sides, cold and distant. The family had received a considerable lift in life, which enabled his parents, although they had seven or eight other children, to complete his education in the London University. That accomplished—very successfully, as I saw by a newspaper report—James Hargrave “ate his terms” at Lincoln’s Inn, was in due time called to the bar, and—knowing, as I did, his mounting ambition, I was sure he had from that moment

the great seal in his imaginary clutch. It was almost the duty of such a man to tacitly disclaim any personal acquaintance with a mere police-officer. He obtained, however, so far as I could judge by the law reports, very few briefs during five or six years; and when engaged, his part was a very subordinate, trifling one. Gall, worm-wood, hell-fire that, I was quite sure, to James Hargrave; in whom, assuming the boy to be father of the man, the quality of patience would be strikingly deficient.

The melodramatic mind of London, and, I have no doubt, of the country generally, was strongly excited by the death, with its attendant circumstances, of Caroline Denby, who was found drowned in the Regent's canal. I mean by the "melodramatic mind," that which revels in—gloats over—details of mystery and crime. Caroline Denby had been nursemaid in the family of Mr. George Watson—a gentleman of fortune, residing in Regent's Park, and having the reputation of being a great admirer of youthful beauty. Caroline Denby, whom I myself had observed with

interest, was a remarkably pretty, interesting girl; her age when she perished eighteen only. The body was discovered, soon after dawn, by a passer-by. Police-officers were soon upon the spot, who at once declared that the poor girl had been murdered. By the marks round her throat, there seemed no doubt that she had been strangled and afterwards flung by the assassin into the canal. In one of her pockets was found a note, in a man's hand, signed "George," appointing to meet her, at nine o'clock the previous evening, not far from where the corpse was found; and there was positive proof that the unfortunate girl had been seduced. An inquest was held on the body, and a verdict returned of wilful murder against some person or persons unknown. A reward of one hundred pounds was offered by the Government for the discovery of the unknown person or persons, and the affair was placed in my hands.

I had not heard the evidence given before the coroner, but I had read it as reported in the newspapers. The impression which it made

upon me and the public generally was that Caroline Denby had been seduced and murdered by her gay master, Mr. George Watson; although sufficient legal proof of his guilt might not have been adduced. He had been seen to toy with the girl when he thought himself unobserved; and when Mrs. Watson, whose suspicions would seem to have been aroused, insisted, with tears and in the hearing of servants, that "the hussy" should be immediately discharged, her husband angrily refused compliance. The name at the foot of the note found in the girl's pocket was his own — "George;" and though the writing did not appear to be his, that might have been easily managed. Moreover, it was shown that the girl—refused leave to go out on the evening in question—had appealed to her master, by whom it was instantly given. To be sure, it was proved that Mr. Watson had gone early to the Princess's Theatre, and been seen and spoken with there by several persons; two of whom expressed their belief—almost positive conviction—that he remained in the house till

the end of the second piece, at about ten o'clock ; and the assignation made in the note was for nine. But the hour might have been changed by verbal agreement, and it was remembered that Caroline Denby had asked leave to remain out till eleven. Then Mr. Watson had gone to the pit—a most unusual circumstance—and he might easily have slipped out of a theatre so crowded as the Princess's on that night, without his departure or absence being noticed by the two friendly witnesses. Another suspicious item was, that, having agreed to preside that very evening at an anniversary-dinner, in aid of a charity, at Paddington, he sent a note, excusing himself, on the plea of indisposition, a few hours before he should have taken the chair. All this, combined with an injudicious suggestion, offered by a solicitor who watched the case on his behalf, that Caroline Denby might have committed suicide, having first vainly attempted to do so by strangling herself, which would account for the marks about her neck, before throwing herself into the water—a suggestion which greatly irritated the jury, whose

minds were full of commiseration for the unhappy victim—nearly brought down upon him a verdict of wilful murder. The coroner—calmer, more skilled in estimating the real value of evidence—dissuaded them from adopting that course, and the verdict as already given was recorded. With that verdict the authorities at the Home Office and Scotland-yard were so dissatisfied, that, at the same time instructions were given me to thoroughly investigate the case, officers were directed to watch the house in Regent's Park day and night; and should Mr. George Watson leave it, never for one moment to lose sight of him. In the event of his attempting to leave the country, they were ordered to arrest him forthwith. As I have said, a large reward—one hundred pounds—was offered for the discovery of the murderer or murderers.

The evidence, of which I have given a summary, did not, when more critically weighed, appear to press so heavily against Mr. Watson. As to having been seen toying with Caroline Denby, there were few pretty girls with whom, if he had a chance, he did not attempt to toy; and I saw by

the copy of the depositions furnished me, it was sworn that Denby—though, like Mr. Watson, she believed they were both unseen—repulsed his advances with indignation up to the last. And would a man, contemplating the murder of the girl, subscribe his real Christian name to a note appointing the place, naming the hour, where and when the foul deed was to be perpetrated? And if the murder—by strangulation, there seemed no doubt—had been committed during a sudden access of passion, would not the assassin have searched the pocket of his victim, to assure himself that no such damning evidence of his guilt as that note should be found upon the body? It was true that that favourable inference would not bear much straining—proving, as it seemed, too much—that the man named, whoever he was who wrote the note, made the assignation, was *not* the murderer. Again, *why* should Mr. George Watson seek to compass the death of the girl? He was rich; could make ample compensation, as far as money could make compensation for the crime of seduction; and it would not have been the first time

that he had braved the world's censure in that respect. The very fact, too, that he had *openly* given the girl permission to leave the house and stop out till eleven on the evening when she met her death told rather for than against him. It was a fine moonlight evening too. Strange, then, an intentional murderer—having no overwhelming inducement to commit such a crime—should take pains, one might almost say, to ensure detection !

The one circumstance which continued to weigh in my mind against him, was that deemed most favourable to him,—that he had been seen, spoken with, in the pit of the Princess's Theatre, by several persons, two of whom were almost certain he remained in the house till ten o'clock. Why did he go there—declining, under a false pretence, an important engagement, that he might do so—except on purpose to be seen by those who could prove the fact ?

Finding myself in this state of dubiety, it occurred to me that I might as well call upon Mr. George Watson ; frankly admit that I was the

detective officer commissioned to investigate the unfortunate affair, and invite him, if he thought that by doing so he might hope to clear himself of the probably unmerited stigma with which public opinion, as he could not but be aware, branded his name, to acquaint me with any circumstance that had fallen within his own knowledge, which might supply but a hint, if of the faintest kind, that might help to the solution of the mystery. I scarcely need remark that I should first remind him that any statement he should volunteer might be used against him, whilst it *could* only be evidence in his favour indirectly: that is, by fixing suspicion upon, and, as I hoped, leading to the discovery of the real culprit. Before, however, hazarding such an unusual step, I consulted the chiefs at Scotland-yard, who, with some hesitation, agreed that it might be well for me to call upon Mr. George Watson.

I was very well received. Mr. George Watson was a gentlemanly person, and I had no doubt, under ordinary circumstances, a gay, convivial, entertaining companion. For the moment he was "a grave

man," oppressed, beaten down by the terrible anathema hurled at him by public opinion.

He expressed gratitude for my visit, and would freely tell me all he knew or suspected that had any possible reference to the cruel death of Caroline Denby.

"I admit at once," he said, "that I was smitten—to the extent that a gentleman of forty, of cultivated taste, and the married father of a family can be supposed to be smitten—with such a person as Caroline Denby. I made overtures to her, all which were repulsed. Almost the last time I spoke with her, she indignantly exclaimed, 'Ah! I shall be as good as Mrs. Watson before long!' I laughed ——"

"One moment, Mr. Watson. This may be important. As I understand, you were making what you call overtures to the girl, when she, repulsing those overtures with indignation, said, 'I shall be as good as Mrs. Watson before long.' Is that so?"

"Yes; Caroline Denby made use of those words, or words to that effect."

"Go on, sir, if you please."

"Mrs. Watson, as you are aware, refused to allow Caroline Denby to go out on the fatal evening. I gave her permission. I had more than one motive for doing so. In the first place, I was jealous!"

"Jealous! I don't understand."

"Yes, jealous! It is somewhat humiliating to confess so much, in reference to a nursery-girl, however attractive. I asked her where she was going; the reply was, to meet a friend, who would take her to the Princess's Theatre. 'Your young man?' said I, perhaps with some bitterness. 'My young *man*,' she pertly replied, with a bridling smile, 'is a *gentleman*!' I was determined to see who the young 'gentleman' was, gave her leave to go, wrote to the secretary of the Charitable Institution, excusing myself from taking the chair at the dinner, and proceeded to the Princess's. I concluded that Caroline and her 'young gentleman' would be in the pit. I was disappointed. She was not there; and I did *not* remain till the end of the second piece,—though I have no doubt the witnesses who deposed to that effect believe I did.

I waited only till the half-pay people came in; and Caroline Denby not coming with them, I left."

Mr. George Watson paused, his countenance expressing a doubt as to whether he ought to go on. He was not long in deciding that it would be well to do so.

"I left the theatre in an ill-humour. To be baffled in the pursuit of any object which, if gained, would be flung, after a moment's possession, in all probability, carelessly aside, is, I need not tell you, to invest that object with a thousand-fold more attractions. I almost began to fancy myself seriously in love with Caroline Denby. Absurdity, of course! Still, that influence was upon me at the time; and remembering to have once seen the girl strolling near the Regent's Canal with a young fellow,—young gentleman, if you like,—the notion entered my head of seeking her there. *And there I saw her.* It was a splendid night. Caroline and the young gentleman,—I concluded from his figure and carriage that he was young, for I did not see his face,—Caroline and the young gentleman were walking side by side, but apart. He wore a military cap

and cloak. I might have approached nearer, but that I saw Mr. Westbrook's (my neighbour) pony-chaise approaching; and not wishing to be seen there—why I can scarcely tell; men are not cased in glass, through which their thoughts, passions, intentions can be discerned—I turned away, hailed an omnibus in the Hampstead-road, and presently found myself in the Haymarket. I did not return home till the next day."

"The person you saw with Caroline Denby wore, you say, a military cap and cloak; but you did not see his face. Was he tall or short, stout or slender?"

"About the middling height, neither slender nor stout."

"And they were walking apart?—as if they were or had been quarrelling?"

"Yes, that was my impression; or perhaps I have only thought so since I heard of the catastrophe."

"I can understand that. You have nothing to add—no important circumstance?"

"None that I can at present call to mind."

"Of course you understand, Mr. Watson, that if at any future time you, or any person representing you, should attempt to prove that you were at the Princess's Theatre till ten o'clock, I should be under the necessity of stating that by your own voluntary avowal you left much earlier than that?"

"True, Mr. Clarke; but I believe you cannot give a part only of the voluntary statement I have made in evidence against me. It must be admitted in its entirety, *quantum valeat*, or not at all."

"Humph! I regret to find, Mr. Watson, you are so well acquainted with the practice of our criminal courts. It deprives your statement of much of its value in my eyes. Good day, sir; I leave you *for the present*."

He started, and his face perceptibly paled. I had emphasized, both by tone and look, the last three words; feeling sure that, though he might have told me the truth, it was not all the truth.

"Stop one moment," he exclaimed, as I was leaving the room; "stop one moment. Let me try to remember. No," he added, after a minute or

so's consideration, "no, I can recollect nothing else."

At my lodgings, a man who gave the name of Alexander King was waiting for me. He had seen by the placard offering the one hundred pounds reward that any information relative to the murder of Caroline Denby was to be communicated to me, and he had called to say what *he* knew about the matter. First, as to himself. He was a groom out of place, and had formerly lived with Mr. Watson, a very kind master, but who had refused to give him a character for sobriety. As that would be sure to come out, King thought it best to say so at once. The man added "that he had waited to see if a reward would be offered before saying anything."

"Very well. And now what have you to say?"

"This : that I saw Mr. George Watson, at about nine o'clock in the evening when Caroline Denby was murdered, talking with her, not one hundred yards from where the body was found."

"You did ? Are you sure ? Did he see you ?"

"I am sure, as I saw his face as plainly as I see

yours. He did *not* see me. I was curious to find out what was going on, and took care he should not. I was not quite near enough to hear what they were talking about; but I heard Mr. Watson, who seemed to be in a great passion, call her "a ridiculous fool." Just then Mr. Westbrook's pony chaise came in sight, and Mr. Watson bolted. I followed, wishing to keep him in view, and thinking that he would perhaps return. I wanted to get a hold of him, you see, so as to make him give me a character. I like to speak out plain. He got into an omnibus; I climbed up to the top, but there I was done. The 'bus stopped to take some one in, and hang me if he mustn't have then slipped out; for no one was taken up afterwards, and when we stopped at the Oxford-street end of Tottenham-court-road, he was gone. I cut back again; but neither Mr. Watson nor Caroline Denby—poor girl! who, you must know, I myself had a fancy for, which drove me to drink—was there to be seen. This is what I have to say, which shows Mr. Watson couldn't have been at the playhouse, as his friend swore he was."

"I knew that before. Still your evidence is very important. You must go with me at once before a magistrate. Don't frighten yourself. It is my duty, believing you have spoken the truth, to obtain a warrant for the arrest of Mr. George Watson."

That was soon done, and within two hours after leaving him, I was again with the alleged culprit, accompanied this time by another officer. I curtly told our errand, adding, "You foolishly attempted to deceive me, by suppressing the fact that you spoke with Caroline Denby after leaving the Princess's Theatre for the purpose of seeing her. The fact that you did so has since been ascertained beyond a doubt."

The next day, Mr. George Watson was formally charged in the Marylebone police-court with the wilful murder of Caroline Denby, and then, sufficient evidence having been given, the prisoner was remanded. Amongst the crowded auditory I noticed, and few there could have helped noticing, Mr. James Hargrave, the barrister. Neither the

prisoner nor the murdered girl, so far as I knew, was known to him ; but had Caroline Denby been his sister, the accused his brother, he could not have been more painfully excited. His flaming glance now rested upon *me*, now upon the prisoner, the next moment upon the magistrate—upon whoever was speaking or giving evidence. Strange—passing strange ! To be sure, he was always of a very excitable temperament ; but there was a fire in those dark eyes which only volcanic passion could have kindled. Had he seen and loved the beautiful nursery-servant ? Was *he* the—the real —— ? My mind refused to shape the dimly-horrible suspicion which glanced across it.

Immediately the magistrate ordered the prisoner to be remanded, Hargrave pressed forward, and whispered eagerly to the solicitor who appeared for Mr. Watson.

“Your worship will accept bail, I trust,” said the solicitor, evidently in compliance with Hargrave’s suggestion. “It can be given to any amount.”

“I dare say it could. But no bail can, as you know, be accepted in such a case, not even by a

judge, at this stage of the inquiry. I am surprised at such a question from a professional gentleman of your experience."

It *was* surprising, and still more so that a barrister should have suggested it. What fiend unseen was whispering in *Hargrave's* ear?

"Mr. Clarke," said that gentleman, accosting me and proffering his hand as we left the court; "Mr. Clarke, it is a long time since we had a chat. Shall you be at home this evening? I wish to speak with you, *in confidence*. You have, I see, the management of this unfortunate case."

"I am instructed, Mr. Hargrave, to make strict inquiry into all circumstances having the remotest relation to the death of Caroline Denby; and I will remain at home for the express purpose of hearing what *you* have to say upon the subject. It is of that, I am quite sure, you wish to speak."

"True! quite true! In confidence, as between old friends."

"Mr. James Hargrave is a barrister, and therefore knows what 'confidence' must mean in such a

case, were you my own brother. I do not invite this confidence, Mr. Hargrave ; but I will accept it in my character of police-officer. I frankly add that you are now an object of suspicion with me, in connexion with this melancholy, mysterious affair."

"That suspicion will soon be removed. The 'confidence' I spoke of does not relate to any wish that you should keep any self-criminating secrets of mine. Not at all. However, I will see you at about eight o'clock this evening, and explain. Good-bye till then."

Mr. James Hargrave was really drunk when he called upon me—not with wine or other intoxicating liquor, though he had perhaps drank freely ; but with nervous excitement, passion ! His mind was on fire ; but what particular demon's flaming glance—whether the Demon of Hate, Revenge, Jealousy, or an incarnation of all three—glared in those burning eyes, I was not sufficiently skilled to decide. I should presently know.

He burst forth at once :—"Watson is innocent

of the murder he is accused of; innocent as you and I. I swear it; and yet he will be hanged—hanged like a dog, unless the truth be made known. And I—I alone—can put you on the track of the real murderer; of the triumphant seducer—the cowardly assassin,—and—oh, ~~what~~ ! that it should be so—my most intimate friend! Clarke”—he went on, with gathering, culminating rage—“Clarke, I loved that unfortunate girl; loved her with such passion that, in a moment of delirium, I offered to marry her. The offer was rejected. She was engaged; would be soon the wife of a gentleman whom I knew well. The name of the successful wooer she would not disclose. A promise had been exacted from her that she should for a time keep that secret. I left her in a fury. Love—rejected love especially—is lynx-eyed, and it was not long before I discovered who it was that had deprived me of the prize,—prey would perhaps be the truer word. It was no other than the man to whom I had virtually introduced the unfortunate girl, by pointing her out to him one Sunday evening in the Regent’s Park,—Lieutenant George Halford,

of the —— regiment of Foot, now quartered at Windsor.”

“ Lieutenant George Halford !”

“ Lieutenant George Halford. He is often in London—very often. He has influential friends, you know ; d—n him !”

“ You must furnish me with some proof, Mr. Hargrave, before I can act upon this terrible accusation.”

“ Furnish yourself with the proofs. Read this note. You will then know how to act.”

“ MY DEAR HARGRAVE,

“ Lose not a moment in forwarding to me the valise which, in the hurry of leaving town on Thursday morning last, I forgot to call for at your chambers. It contains papers of momentous consequence to me just now. I would run up to town myself, but that I am very—very ill !

“ Yours faithfully,

“ GEORGE HALFORD.”

“ This note does not enlighten me, Mr. Hargrave. If you have nothing else ——”

“Tut!”—he broke in, impatiently. “*Tut!* I have taken the liberty to open the valise, examine the papers of such momentous consequence to him just now. There are several notes addressed to Halford by Caroline Denby: one, the last-dated, imploring him to see her without delay, in reply to which he wrote that found upon his victim. He is naturally apprehensive that suspicion may fall upon him,—no wonder he is ill—very ill—he having been seen many times with the unfortunate girl; and should that be the case, what more natural than that the police should make inquiries at the chamber of his friend Hargrave, where, it is known, he was generally to be found when in town? Should the police do so, one of the first articles they would see is the valise, with the name of Lieutenant George Halford painted thereon. In one of the girl’s notes,” continued Hargrave, “is an allusion to myself. She feared I was in the habit of watching them, and bids her lover ‘and future husband beware of that Mr. Hargrave.’ ‘There is danger in him,’ she adds. That note read by the police—by you—it will be your impera-

tive duty to insist upon my appearance before the magistrate,—where I shall be required to state, upon oath, all I know relative to the murder. That will mainly be, that I saw Halford and Caroline Denby together on the evening of the murder, and heard high words pass between them.”

“How was Halford dressed?”

“He wore a military cap and cloak.”

“That tallies with a statement made by Mr. Watson. Did you see him at or near the place?”

“I did not. Nor did I myself remain long. I was not desirous that Halford should see me, and I left him and Caroline Denby together.”

“So far it is but a case of suspicion against Halford. No jury would convict upon it. What sufficient motive could he have had for murdering the girl?”

“A supreme motive!” replied Hargrave, the fire of passion, which had cooled somewhat, blazing fiercely forth again. “Ask the wealthy widow of the Bishop of —— if he had not! He was to have married her daughter, Emily ——, a few weeks hence—one of the loveliest maidens in

London, and who will have a dowry of fifty thousand pounds at least. There is no question that he promised Caroline Denby to make her his wife—so madly infatuated, like myself, was he with her; and I have no doubt, from a passage in one of the letters, that she had heard of the contemplated marriage, and threatened to write to the Bishop's widow."

"Such a threat would certainly have been motive sufficient. By-the-bye, I have seen you, Mr. Hargrave, more than once with the ladies in the late Bishop of ——'s carriage."

"Very likely," said Hargrave, turning away. "I have the honour of a slight acquaintance with the family. At what hour shall you call at my chambers to-morrow morning?"

"I shall go there at once, taking another officer with me. Delays are not permissible in cases of homicide. Lieutenant Halford might send some one for the valise. Having secured that, we shall, should the letters justify such a step, be off at once to Windsor."

"To arrest Halford?"

"Unquestionably. I do not, as I said before, believe that a jury will convict upon such evidence; but it will amply justify his arrest and examination before a magistrate."

"I think with you," said Mr. Hargrave, "that a conviction, should no corroborative evidence be forthcoming, would be very—very doubtful."

"Not at all doubtful. He would be acquitted to a certainty. You, as a barrister, must know that. But the arrest, the strong suspicion of his guilt, the exposure of his criminal intercourse with Caroline Denby," I added, looking hard at Hargrave, "will as certainly *prevent his marriage with the Bishop's rich and lovely heiress!*"

"Yes, to be sure—to be sure," said Mr. James Hargrave, with suddenly heightened colour. "I did not think of that!"

"Didn't you?" thought I; "then I am strangely mistaken, that's all."

Lieutenant George Halford was taken in his bed the same night, and brought immediately to London. He expressed no surprise; but warmly

protested his innocence. The note found in the girl's pocket he admitted to be his, and that he had met her at the hour appointed. High words passed between them, and they parted in anger. I asked if it was true that he was soon to have married the late Bishop of ——'s daughter.

"It is true," he replied, with strong emotion ; "but that dream is over, however the charge I am in custody for may be disposed of."

As the prisoner admitted all the facts before the magistrate on the following day which Mr. Hargrave could have proved, that gentleman, to his great relief, was not called upon to give evidence. The magistrate, though with considerable hesitation, finally committed Halford for trial on the capital charge. Mr. Watson was liberated, and left the court without a stain upon his character, so far as the murder of Caroline Denby was concerned. I confess that I felt great doubt of the soundness of the worthy magistrate's decision in both cases ; neither could I help suspecting that James Hargrave knew more than he chose, or dared to say, concerning the girl's death.

The Grand Jury ignored the bill preferred at the Old Bailey against Lieutenant Halford, in deference to the recommendation of the Recorder, who, in his charge, said that as the evidence disclosed by the depositions taken before the committing magistrate would not justify a conviction, it would be better to throw out the bill against the prisoner, who might in that case be tried thereafter for the murder, should more conclusive evidence of his guilt be discovered. Lieutenant Halford was consequently discharged out of custody, with a blasted character—a free but utterly ruined man. The wrong he had confessedly done Caroline Denby was bitterly avenged.

Several times during the next five or six months I saw Mr. James Hargrave in the late Bishop of ——'s carriage, always with the prelate's widow and daughter; and I more than once heard from parties likely to be well informed that he was the young lady's accepted suitor. My surprise was great, therefore, when I read in the papers a flaming account of her marriage with the eldest

son of a viscount in the peerage of England. A fickle-minded lady, it seemed ; but coronets would have charms as potent with a bishop's daughter as with supposedly less worldly-minded damsels. Hargrave had missed the great prize, after all. Could he have foreseen that he should, would Halford have been charged with the murder of Caroline Denby? I thought not—decidedly not.

The next day, a hurriedly-scrawled note from Hargrave was placed in my hands by his clerk. The writer wished to see me immediately.

“Mr. Hargrave is dying,” said the pale, breathless man. “The doctor is with him ; but nothing can be done to save, or even prolong his life. We must be quick, if you would see him alive.”

A sad spectacle awaited me at my old school-fellow's chambers. Hargrave, extended upon a sofa, was dying by his own act. He had taken poison, and was sinking fast. He recognised me, and held out his shaking hand in token that he did. He then motioned for some brandy to be

given to him. The spirit gave him sufficient strength to say—

“Hand me that paper on the table. This paper, Clarke,” continued the wretched suicide, “is my dying confession, written by my own hand ; and knowing myself to be dying, that I have but a few minutes to live, I declare it to be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, as respects the death of Caroline Denby. Read it aloud.”

“I, James Hargrave, barrister-at-law, being of sound mind, make the following statement. It is the discharge of a debt of honour due to Lieutenant George Halford ; and as I have at last finally decided to cast off the burden of a worthless, intolerable existence, it may as well be paid. Overwhelmed with pecuniary difficulties, bankrupt in heart and hope, no longer capable of labour, why should I live ? This act of reparation accomplished, I shall gladly—most gladly—close my eyes for ever on a hateful world. As to the next, I must take my chance. George Halford is innocent of the death of Caroline Denby ; that is to say, she perished by her own act, not by his ; though it

cannot be denied that he was indirectly the cause of her untimely end. She must have thrown herself into the Regent's Canal during an access of despair. I was watching them, and distinctly heard him say that was the last time they would ever meet. He said something about a liberal allowance of money, which the poor, proud girl fiercely resented. He then went off, and I presented myself, endeavoured to soothe her passionate grief with kind, respectful words; for I loved the girl, and my heart bled with pity for her. She refused to be comforted, and angrily bade me begone. I did go; and was about half way to my chambers when the terrible idea occurred to me—I repeat that I loved, deeply loved the unfortunate girl—when the terrible idea occurred to me that she might in her agony of sorrow, shame, destroy herself by drowning—the canal being, as one may say, so temptingly near. Instantly I turned back, having been perhaps half an hour, perhaps more, away. When I reached the place, she was nowhere to be seen. The moon had gone down, but it was starlight, and peering along the dark

surface of the canal, I at last descried part of a white dress caught in a projecting timber of the lock. With much difficulty I caught hold of it, and ultimately succeeded in dragging the body out of the water. It was Caroline Denby's. She was quite dead, and the sight of the pale corse, the lightless, blindly staring eyes, so beautiful when I last, so short a time previously, looked thereon, threw me into an ecstasy of rageful grief. I knelt down by, embraced, kissed, hugged the dead girl; was in truth for a time, I knew not how long, mad, literally mad. At last, regaining self-possession, I saw discolouring marks about her neck. There was nothing of the kind when I drew her out of the water. I am sure of that. I, in that passionate delirium, must have inflicted them. It was an anonymous note from me, handed to the solicitor at the police-court during Watson's examination, which induced that gentleman to ask the surgeon who was giving evidence if he was sure those marks had been made *before* life was extinct. The learned medico had no doubt they had been made before life was extinct. A blockhead!—fool!

But to go on. The danger to myself, should I be found there, immediately rose up before me in ghastly shadow, and I hurried away. It was an after-thought of mine to endeavour to profit in a certain quarter—(heartless, kindless woman—devil rather)—that I might profit in a certain quarter by fastening suspicion upon Halford. Clarke, the detective, whom I intend sending for, always, I think, suspected me. If of the murder of Caroline Denby, he grossly wronged me. Mr. Watson's peril also influenced me. Depraved, reckless, idle scamp that I am, I am not all bad. This is all I have to say.

“Signed, JAMES HARGRAVE.”

As I finished reading the paper, I looked round upon him whose hand had traced the characters. He was dead!

AUGUSTUS TEMPLE *ALIAS* JAMES RYDER.

A MESSENGER from Scotland-yard brought me the following note, before I was up, from the Chief Commissioner :—"IMPORTANT.—Clarke must go at once to 15, Newman-street, Oxford-street, and ask for Mrs. Norton—a person yesterday discharged, as being convalescent, from Middlesex Hospital. The officer will confer with Mrs. Norton, take full notes of her statement, and immediately communicate with Superintendent Fisher. Further instructions for Clarke's guidance will then be given.—R. M."

I quickly rose, breakfasted, and was at 15, Newman-street in less than half-an-hour after receiving the Commissioner's order. I had previously heard that a nobleman and Cabinet Minister took an interest in Mrs. Norton—the reason why being, that owing to an accident, for which the coachman was

to blame, that lady had been knocked down by the noble lord's carriage, whilst crossing Oxford-street. His lordship having several times visited at the hospital, had heard and given credence, qualified credence probably, to the singular story which, not many days before the accident, she had partially confided to Superintendent Fisher, and which that functionary had civilly pooh-poohed. The superintendent mentioned the circumstance to me; and I, judging from his version of what the applicant had stated, thought he had done right in refusing to interfere in the business as a police-officer, and advising her to consult a respectable solicitor. But it was a horse of quite another colour now that the Commissioner, put in motion by a Cabinet Minister, instructed us that the affair was "important"—urgent.

Mrs. Norton was seated, propped up with pillows, in an easy chair, and if convalescent, was certainly very weak. Her age would be considerably over forty; and though her face was pale, care-worn, the crows'-feet stamped by time and suffering deeply graven, it was evident that she had been

very handsome; that her still brilliant eyes must, in youth, have blazed with the fire of many triumphs.

I handed her the Commissioner's memorandum, by way of introduction. She glanced at it, anxiously scrutinized my look and bearing, then said:—"You would seem to be the man I want. Courage, caution, sagacity, are written in your face. (Soft-sawder, of course; it is sometimes worth a lady's while to flatter even a police-officer.) Courage, caution, sagacity, are written in your face, if I do not misinterpret the index. Those qualities, combined with zeal, will all be needed to bring this perplexed, perplexing business to a successful issue. Please to hand me the writing-case on the side-board yonder. Written memoranda are scarcely required to aid such a memory as mine; but I am told to be particular as to dates. Are you ready to take the full notes you are required to submit to Superintendent Fisher? Not a man that, by-the-bye, to set the Thames on fire!"

"I am quite ready, madam."

"Very well; and I will be as brief as possible.

It is, however, I suppose, necessary to be unreserved?"

"Yes, madam. I cannot hope to work successfully in the dark."

The narrative was a prolix one ; the tediousness of which it is not necessary to inflict upon my readers. Its kernel will be easily eliminated. First, to run rapidly over Mrs. Norton's maiden history :—Her father's name was Charteris ; and she was a native of Arundel, Surrey. She had a brother who, when a mere boy, ran off to sea, and his relatives had not since heard directly from or of him. The father would seem to have been a harsh man—his life one of the unnumbered wrecks that strew the pathway of the world. Starting with some advantages, he had taken the wrong turning, and early found himself stranded in shallows, harassed by ignoble miseries. From these he was rescued by the marriage of his daughter with Robert Norton, Esquire, of Trafalgar House, Three Bridges, a place not many miles distant, and on the road from Brighton to London. Mr. Norton, one of the projectors of the Brighton

Chain Pier, a man of a speculative turn of mind, was wealthy, and though more than forty years older than his bride, ventured upon matrimony after he had passed his sixtieth year in unshackled bachelorhood. Mr. Charteris took up his abode permanently with his son-in-law, to whom he was junior by a score of years. One child was the issue of this marriage, Emily Chantrey Norton, the second baptismal name having, as I understood, been bestowed in honour of her godfather, Chantrey the sculptor, an intimate acquaintance of Mrs. Norton. Seventeen years passed away. The daughter, gifted with dazzling beauty, her personal perfections set off, enhanced by educational culture, and reputedly a rich heiress, had, I need hardly say, no lack of suitors, some of them very eligible ones; one notably so, a gentleman afterwards created a baronet, and, when I was ordered to see and confer with Mrs. Norton, M.P. for a populous borough. These were all rejected, by advice, as it seemed, of Mrs. Norton. Mothers have always been chartered dreamers, and I was, therefore, not surprised to hear that Mrs. Norton was desirous

and expectant of a coronet for her beautiful child, and would not be content with a less prize than that. This was the bait with which the father of mischief angled for and caught them.

One Augustus Temple, Esquire, a gentleman of fashionable exterior and correspondent manners, came to reside for a time near Three Bridges. He rented a shooting-box in the neighbourhood, and lived for several weeks in almost strict retirement. He had two servants only—James Summers, a groom, and, in his way, fast sporting man ; and an elderly woman of the name of Berridge. She was the groom's aunt, much attached to him, and wholly under his control.

Mrs. Norton had since reason to believe that Mr. Temple, as he called himself, had seen Emily Chantrey Norton at Brighton, and been greatly struck with her rare beauty. That circumstance was not allowed to transpire. The meeting and resulting acquaintanceship of the young stranger with Miss Norton were thought to have been brought about by the accident of his having come

to reside for the time in that part of the country. However that might be, Mr. Temple soon became the young lady's constant companion in her walks. Mrs. Norton watched the rapid progress of the intimacy with natural inquietude, and at last refused to permit her daughter to leave the house unless accompanied by herself: a prudent step, quickened by a hint she received from Caroline Dent—Miss Emily's personal attendant—that Mr. Temple had proposed private marriage to her susceptible young mistress.

This, however, was denied by Miss Norton; and the waiting-maid herself, when confronted with the young lady, admitted that she had no better authority for the assertion than her own suspicion. This was false, the truth being that the mistress and maid had quarrelled. Caroline Dent, following her young lady's example, had been making too frequent rendezvous, in her mistress's opinion, with the good-looking groom, and been forbidden to go out for that purpose. In the first flash of resentment she had dropped the hint spoken of to Mrs. Norton, but the breach between her and Miss

Emily being quickly healed, she had recanted the partial betrayal.

Mrs. Norton's awakened suspicions could not, however, be so easily allayed. The daughter was to be kept in rigorous confinement till such time as Mr. Temple should make an open revelation, not of his love, his passion—there could be no doubt about that—but of his social position, which if found to be in the mother's opinion sufficiently exalted, the affair would be taken into serious consideration.

Mr. Norton, I should state, was nothing in the business. He was fast approaching fourscore, was afflicted with perennial gout, and, which placed him in still humbler subjection to his imperious wife, had greatly diminished his wealth—*how* greatly Mrs. Norton was afraid to distinctly ascertain—by unfortunate ventures in railway shares and other speculative investments. Love for a man old enough to be her grandfather she could never have felt, but riches—worldly astuteness—always command respect. Those titles to esteem being no longer his, the husband in her

eyes was a silly fool as well as a uxorious dotard. It was not necessary that Mrs. Norton should tell me so in words. I also readily understood that the lowering aspect of the family's pecuniary prospects rendered her the easier dupe of Mr. Temple's audacious, and yet really clumsy scheme for securing Miss Emily Norton's person and supposed large fortune. The eager adventurer was perfectly aware that if the ambitious mother knew his circumstances and antecedents, and a regular, open marriage could not be solemnized without her becoming acquainted with them, the affair would be over. Yes, and he was cognizant of her dominant weakness. He had, indeed, already prepared the ground for the fruition of his hopes.

Summers had more than once hinted confidentially to Caroline Dent that his master was not what he seemed, but a far greater person. Those hesitating confidences were always followed by expressions of regret for his own unguardedness of speech. Should Mr. Temple know that he had hinted such a thing, he should be discharged at once without a character. Caroline Dent promised

not to repeat a syllable of what he had said, or should say, that he might wish to keep dark ; and so, assured of impunity, Summers in a moment of effusive candour unveiled to his sweetheart the mystery which he was bound in duty to conceal. Mr. Temple was the son, the eldest son of an earl—the Earl of Harrowby ; he himself Lord Sandon, whose name his dear Caroline had, no doubt, often seen in the newspapers. It was a great North of England family. His father (the earl) was naturally desirous that he should marry amongst the highest order of nobility ; but the young lord was of a remarkably romantic turn of mind, and had resolved not only to wed for love, but never to chance the risk of being cheated into marriage with a woman who, in accepting him for a husband, might be influenced solely or chiefly by the ambition of sharing his title and wealth. All this and similar stuff, administered by Mrs. Berridge, the groom's aunt, a crafty agent in the plot, was eagerly swallowed by the silly waiting-maid, who was, moreover, made to believe that immediately after Lord Sandon's marriage with

Miss Norton, should it ever take place, he (Summers) would be set up handsomely in business in the public line by his lordship ; when he would, of course, make Caroline Dent his wife without delay.

Every word of these confidential revelations would, it was well known by the plotters, be communicated by the maid to her mistress ; by Miss Norton to her mother, who listened thereto with keen interest, with fearful hope. Mrs. Norton was perplexed in the extreme. The bare possibility of her daughter one day becoming Countess of Harrowby almost turned her brain, but she still retained sufficient sense to require some better evidence that Mr. Temple was Lord Sandon than the mere assertion of his groom. How that indispensable proof could be obtained without making shipwreck of so great a hope was the question of questions as eagerly debated by Caroline Dent as by Mrs. Norton herself—the beautiful Emily being the while kept more rigidly than ever *au secret*, of course, to increase the romantic lover's ardour. Seemingly irrefragable

evidence of the truth of the groom's story was very soon obtained by a mode which Mrs. Norton did not attempt to justify, though she excused it, under the plea of a natural anxiety to secure so brilliant a prize in the matrimonial lottery for her beloved child. She might not, however, have acted with so much precipitation, had it not been certain that the fact of her husband's hopeless insolvency would be known to every soul in Three Bridges before many days had passed. She could not calculate what effect such a circumstance might have upon the mind of a proud, sensitive nobleman.

"Caroline Dent," said Mrs. Norton, "came into the room where I was sitting, early in the day, much flushed and excited, with a small bag in her hand. Her errand was briefly told. She had been to see Mrs. Berridge, who was confined to her bed with a violent cold. Mr. Temple and the groom were gone to Brighton, and would not return till late in the evening. Talking with Berridge—as she frequently did—of the interrupted wooing of Miss Emily by Mr. Temple, the housekeeper—(who was

as desirous as her nephew that the marriage should come off as soon as possible, there always being so many slips betwixt the cup and the lip, and hearing from Dent that I would insist upon clear proof that the proposed bridegroom was in truth Lord Sandon)—suggested an easy method of satisfying my very natural scruples. In an adjoining room was Mr. Temple's writing-desk, containing his correspondence. She (Berridge) knew where he always placed his keys when he left the place. Some of the letters were, no doubt, written by friends in his confidence ; and would, almost to a certainty, establish who Mr. Temple really was, beyond question. 'After your mistress has read the letters, they can be replaced in the desk ; her doubts and fears will have been removed,' added Berridge ; 'and if not, no harm will have been done.' 'I thought so, too,' continued Dent ; 'and here are the letters I found—five in number.' ”

“A very perilous as well as audacious trick to play,” I remarked, “had it not been so evidently a trap set by the pretended Temple and his accomplices.”

I have already remarked that I had heard the substance of Mrs. Norton's narrative from Superintendent Fisher.

"A very perilous thing to do," said Mrs. Norton. "I felt that; and for a brief while hesitated to read the letters. Maternal solicitude conquered," continued the lady. "There could not, I also reasoned, be any harm done, whatever might be the result, as affording or not affording light upon our perplexing position. The perusal of the letters decided me. No shadow of doubt remained upon my mind that Mr. Temple was Lord Sandon. Only one contained no allusion whatever to that circumstance. The post-mark on that was 'Brighton.' It was a business-letter, commencing with— 'Sir.' The others, all posted in London, and evidently from intimate friends, began with 'My dear Sandon:' but only one of the writers appeared to be exactly aware of why his lordship was passing under the name of Temple. That letter was conclusive with me. I took a copy. Here it is. You can read it."

“Middle Temple, London,

“September 28th.

“MY DEAR SANDON,

“I shall not fail to call at Storr and Mortimer’s to-morrow, respecting the jewellery; and will let you know when Mr. Temple is likely to receive it. Costly presents of the kind have, I know, great influence with a certain order of young ladies. I must, however, repeat my earnest hope that Mrs. N.—who seems to be a judicious, sensible woman—will prove inexorable. Depend upon it, your fancy, whim, anything you please, is a very absurd one. I do not, of course, dispute your taste. The daughter is, I doubt not, beautiful as an angel—amiable in the highest degree of amiability,—refined, graceful, and so on. Nevertheless, run away from her—flee temptation without delay. Such utterly unequal marriages never lead to permanent happiness. The young lady herself might, no doubt, be a very presentable Lady Sandon, and develop, in the fulness of time, into a dignified Countess of Harrowby; but the plebeian connexion—the *family*, my dear fellow—

there's the rub! You don't mention how many brothers and sisters the divine girl has: a dozen at least, no doubt. A *faux pas* in youth may be excused—society soon condones it. But *mésalliance*—the marriage of the heir to an English earldom with a boat-builder's (her father-in-law is a boat or barge-builder, I forget which) daughter would be an outrage upon the proprieties. 'The Devil take the proprieties! eh? You do not care a straw for the opinion of society. Why should you? Of course, you do not *now*, but you *will* care, when it is too late to do so. Repentance may be late, but it will be sure and bitter. However, if Wilful will to water, Wilful must drench or drown. As regards your legal query, the case is quite clear. You are, at present, a lord by courtesy only—James Rydër, commonly called Lord Sandon; and you will have to be married, should that catastrophe really await you, in the name of 'Augustus Temple'—(since that *nom de preux Chevalier* is to be kept up to the last)—otherwise 'James Ryder.' The fatal knot will then be tied fast enough. By-the-bye, what excuse shall you make to the earl,

for drawing the thumping cheque you will require to pay Storr and Mortimer,—but they can wait,—and to defray the enormous cost of the wedding tour you contemplate? This, too, not very long after your heavy losses at Goodwood! Again, I say, pause! reflect! whilst there is yet time for profitable reflection! Your attached and very anxious friend,

“SIDNEY BEAUCHAMP.”

“A crafty letter, madam; composed, no doubt, by Augustus Temple, and posted like the others in London by friends of his. I am not surprised that you were deceived by it, though the last paragraph but one would have opened my eyes.”

“You mean that relative to the heavy cheque which it would be necessary to draw on the Earl, Lord Sandon’s father?”

“Clearly so; and, if I understand aright, Augustus Temple perfectly well knew at the time that the pretty sum of five thousand pounds, bequeathed to Miss Norton some months previously, was lying in the Bank of England, and

nothing was required but your written consent to enable her to withdraw the same."

"How could I suppose the villain knew it? The money, in fact, was in the house, in my own immediate possession. I had withdrawn it in consequence of a ridiculous, but quite real, apprehension, that it might possibly be impounded by my husband's creditors."

"Your daughter and her confidante, Caroline Dent, knew the five thousand pounds were actually in the house. It followed, therefore, that the groom, the housekeeper, and scoundrel-in-chief, would be cognizant of that important fact."

"True; but the thought did not cross my mind at the time. I was, it is folly to deny, absorbed—carried off my feet—by being brought within practical reach, as it were, of the dazzling social position offered to my dear Emily. I knew, too, that she was sincerely attached to Temple; that, left to herself, she would have accepted the hand of the fellow had he not possessed a shilling. A more specious, plausible person I never spoke with. We now come," continued Mrs. Norton, with

acid petulance, "to the gist of the business in relation to your detective services. A letter from Temple to my daughter, taken charge of by Dent, Emily was permitted to receive, and before a week had passed they were married, with my pretendedly reluctant consent. It is useless to attempt putting a gloss on the matter. They were married at Three Bridges parish church. Everybody said Miss Norton had flung herself away upon an adventurer, whilst I secretly exulted that she had clutched a coronet. Immediately after the ceremony they left for London, and thence proceeded to Paris."

"The bridegroom taking with him the five thousand pounds; which sum prevented the necessity of an immediate application to his father, the Earl of Harrowby?"

"No; four thousand only. I retained one thousand, with my daughter's consent, for my own use. To that her husband could make no objection."

"Certainly not; a very unreasonable rascal if he had. Pray go on, madam."

“About five weeks after the marriage my husband was declared bankrupt; and but for the thousand pounds we should have been without available means. I wrote to my daughter, breaking the matter to her as gently as possible—the letter being, I need hardly say, also intended to be laid before Lord Sandon. The reply was a thunderbolt; which not only shattered into dust my fine castles in the clouds, but for a number of hours literally deprived me of reason. I was wild—furious—could have torn myself to pieces for having permitted the scoundrel to so egregiously dupe, befool me; and that agony of rage was, let me confess, barbed by the fiery stings of shame—of self-reproach.

“Directly Emily’s husband had run his eye over my letter, he broke into furious passion, swore he had been regularly swindled into marrying a pauper, when he thought to wed a wealthy heiress; flung at Emily that he was no more Lord Sandon than he was the Duke of Wellington; and, finally, left his bewildered, swooning wife under the care of Dent, and with about one hundred

pounds out of the four thousand in her possession. She has not seen nor heard of him since. Caroline Dent—I talk nonsense, Mrs. Summers (she was married to the groom)—remained with her unfortunate mistress; Summers went off with his master. The shock so completely prostrated my betrayed, unhappy child, that she was physically unable to return to England, passionately as she longed, in that cruel abandonment, to see and embrace her mother. I started for Paris the moment I was able to do so, brought Emily to England, and we finally—my husband having died—took up our abode in the immediate neighbourhood of Arundel, Surrey; our chief means of support being three hundred pounds per annum settled for life, by my husband, upon Mr. Charteris, my father, at the time of my marriage, which income will, of course, die with him. He enjoys, however, excellent health for his age.”

“You lost no time, Fisher told me, in ascertaining that the real Lord Sandon knew nothing about the fellow who had so audaciously duped you.”

"I did; and that no such person existed as Sidney Beauchamp, of the Middle Temple. Why the impostor should have pitched upon the Harrowby family, in particular, I cannot imagine."

"Well, I have a sort of hazy notion of what may have been his reason for doing that. Your daughter had the reputation of being a rich heiress. He wished to contract with her a really valid marriage. Looking through the peerage, he saw that the Harrowby family name was Ryder; and Ryder, be assured, madam, is the fellow's real name. At least, I suspect so; giving the opinion for what it may be worth."

"Yes; I, of course, consulted the peerage, and found that the family name was really Ryder. That helped to confirm the delusion I was under."

"Of course it would; Ryder *alias* Temple knew that very well. Upon my word, a very clever conspiracy—atrocious as clever. But cleverest players with such edge tools generally end by cutting their own throats. Your daughter," I went on to say, "has a son; or, to speak with precision, had a son by this marriage?"

“Yes, Augustus—a fine, healthy boy—was born about eight months after Emily’s desertion by her husband. That fact I, acting under legal advice, took care should be at any time capable of being judicially verified.”

“You did wisely, madam. And now as to the abduction of the child when, as I think the superintendent informed me, it was three years old, or thereabout?”

“Rather more than three years old; and it is now about six since the boy was stolen away.”

“Please to give me very exact particulars, madam. The partial relation of the circumstances by Fisher impresses me with a notion that it is in that direction we must break cover if at all.”

“Mrs. Summers, as I have said, remained with her deserted mistress in Paris. She is of a kindly disposition; and finally decided upon casting in her lot with us at Arundel, in preference to seeking more lucrative service. She became much attached to the child Augustus; he with her. Of Summers she had not heard since his flight from Paris with Temple, or Ryder; but the poor

woman always cherished the idea that the fellow would one day return to claim her for his wife.

“One summer evening,” continued Mrs. Norton, “soon after we had taken tea, I, with my father, took a stroll through the Arundel Castle woods. Suddenly a man crossed the opening to a glade not very far ahead of us. I had but a momentary glance at his face, but that caused my heart to beat so tumultuously that I was near fainting. As certainly as that I live and breathe, it was James Summers. I made my father sit on the sward whilst I hastened at my best speed after the groom; I could not overtake or see him. I believe he recognised me, and had therefore hurried off. I returned home, and asked, immediately I entered the door, for Caroline Summers. She was gone out with the child, Augustus; had been absent a full hour. A vague fear seized me. Search was immediately made for the woman and boy; it was fruitless. Neither has since been heard of.”

“Did the woman leave anything of value behind?”

“Her clothes only; worth, perhaps, five or six pounds.”

“You missed nothing of value—jewellery, for example?”

“Not an article; and my daughter’s jewellery is of considerable value. There was a diamond-ring on her toilet-table which her father gave two hundred guineas for. Summers knew its value, and might easily have appropriated it.”

“As I supposed: it was a question only of stealing the child. And now, madam, if you please, as to your having seen Augustus Temple, otherwise James Ryder, in Saint James’s-street, a short time ago. But first, to finish about the little boy; are there any natural marks about him?”

“Yes. A strawberry strongly marked on the nape of the neck, and one mole just beneath it.”

“That may prove of gravest consequence. Now then, madam, as to the rencontre in St. James’s-street.”

“Emily and I were in London, upon business which I need not enter upon. When walking down St. James’s-street our eyes fell together upon two

gentlemen seated in an open barouche—a dark green barouche—which was driving rapidly towards Piccadilly. One of those gentlemen, dressed in plain clothes, was my daughter's husband. We are both certain of it. Emily fell faint upon the pavement, and before I could raise her, and look round, the barouche had disappeared."

"Was the gentleman seated with your daughter's husband in plain clothes?"

"No ; he wore a naval uniform, and was in full dress. The coat had two epaulettes, and there were honorary insignia of some kind fastened on his breast. The barouche and general turn-out indicated that the owner was a man of wealth and distinction."

"The colour of the liveries. Did you mark that?"

"I did not. There was no time."

"And you have not seen your daughter's husband since?"

"I am not sure that I have, though I have remained in London expressly in the hope of doing

so. I *thought* I saw him in Oxford-street ; and it was when running across the street, to make sure, that I met with the accident from which I am still suffering."

"Have you anything else to add ?"

"No, except to say that my daughter has sent me from Arundel a wonderfully striking likeness of her husband. It was painted in Paris, and left behind when he hurried from that city. She fancies it may prove of service in the hands of the detective police."

"I will tell you when I see it. Of very little use, if any, madam. There is nothing peculiar or decided in the certainly handsome face. Brown hair, light moustaches, full whiskers, straight nose, gray eyes. Such a description would apply to thousands of men. It is a personal appearance, too, that could be so easily changed if Mr. Ryder or Temple should have reason to suspect that the police were employed to trace him out. Simply dyeing the brown hair and whiskers black would render him unrecognisable except by those who knew him intimately. As, however, the gentleman

with your daughter's husband was a naval officer, and you say the likeness is a very striking one, I will show it to the attendants of the military and naval clubs first, next to the others, and ask if they know such a person either as a member or a visitor at the clubs. That failing, it may be as well, the portrait being in my judgment a very finely painted one, we might ask Messrs. Colnaghi, for example, to permit it to be hung conspicuously in the shop, where the likeness may be recognised. One reflection which may not have occurred to you makes me think, that in spite of Mr. Ryder or Temple having been seen in a brilliant barouche side by side with a naval officer of high rank, he cannot have come into a large fortune, as you hinted to Fisher would in your opinion prove to be the case. Were it so, he would surely have sense, if not spirit or honesty, enough to return the five thousand pounds he obtained of you, your consent in writing being essential to its attainment, by a false pretence. He did not merely tell a naked lie; it was a lie with corroborative circumstances—the forged letters and

so on. He must be aware that should Summers the groom, Mrs. Summers, or Mrs. Berridge turn round upon him, he would be in a very perilous position. More than that, he, the groom, and Mrs. Berridge might be indicted, should supporting testimony turn up, for a felonious conspiracy. He never—supposing him to have, as you suppose, ample means at his disposal—would remain obnoxious to such a charge, even though it might for technical reasons fall through. The money would have been returned to *you*.”

“Why, then, was Mrs. Summers bribed—cajoled, at all events—by some powerful motive to steal the boy? You yourself believe that Ryder, or Temple, through his agent, the groom, prevailed upon the woman to commit that crime.”

“That is true. Well, madam, I shall give this matter my best consideration, and again communicate with you directly any good purpose is likely to be answered by so doing.”

My “full notes” elicited an order to go roundly into the affair. My next step, in obedience to

the order, was to visit the club-houses, taking the portrait with me. 'Twas trouble thrown away. No one had the slightest recollection of such a gentleman, and as a last resource I, through a third highly respectable party, obtained leave to hang the portrait conspicuously in Messrs. Colnaghi's shop. The pretence was that the much-distressed relatives of the original doubtfully hoped—other modes of inquiry having failed—to discover his whereabouts by that bizarre experiment.

This shallow trap limed, I was considering what further might be done, when a note reached me through the post from Mrs. Norton, who had returned to Arundel, requesting to see me there immediately, a very important communication having been forwarded to her by Mr. James Ryder, through Messrs. Barstowe, the solicitors, of Funnival's-inn. I obeyed the summons without delay, and was both surprised and amused by Messrs. Barstowe's letter. Those gentlemen had received two thousand pounds, the moiety of a sum of four thousand, which James Ryder, Esquire, sometimes calling himself Augustus Temple, who at one

time honestly believed that he had contracted a legal marriage with Emily Chantrey Norton, had received, under a misapprehension, from that lady's mother. The two thousand pounds would be handed over to Mrs. Norton at Messrs. Barstowe's office on any day she might please to name, a precedent condition being that she signed a certain document, a copy of which would be sent for inspection and approval to any solicitor that lady would name. Messrs. Barstowe were instructed to add that Mr. James Ryder, who had lately visited England for a short time, had left for Spain, in which country he had settled for life, having been informed that Mrs. Norton, for whom he felt unfeigned respect, had been so ill-advised as to set detective officers on his track. To save her further trouble and expense, he frankly admitted that it was by his order the boy Augustus, his son, had been brought away from Arundel, and that he was now residing, and would continue to reside, with his father. Mr. James Ryder would, moreover, covenant to allow Emily Chantrey Norton one hundred and fifty pounds per annum

for life, and as soon as possible—certainly within three years—to reimburse the other half of the four thousand pounds received of Mrs. Norton by mistake ; but this only upon condition of a solemn obligation being subscribed that all further scandal, talk, allusion to the alleged marriage, should cease at once and for ever. That stipulation fairly carried out, there would be no objection to Ellen Chantrey Norton seeing her son under proper regulations.

“ Well,” said the anxious eyes of Mrs. Norton, eagerly perusing mine, as I finished and unfolded the letter, “ what think you ? ”

“ The man is a shallow fool, as well as a consummate villain ! ” said I. “ He could scarcely have composed the letter signed ‘ Sidney Beauchamp ; ’ or, if so, he has lost all skill in adroit lying. James Ryder is in England, and frightened out of what poor wit he ever possessed.”

“ Frightened ! ” said a soft, silver voice close beside me—“ frightened ! What should frighten Mr. Ryder ? ”

I turned sharply round, and knew that the

speaker was Mrs. Ryder, who had just before entered the room. A lovelier face than hers I had never seen.

“Well, madam,” said I, blunderingly, “he ought not to be frightened by the near prospect of finding himself compelled to acknowledge that the lady before me is his wife, to all legal intents and purposes, especially as he seems to have come into possession of a competent estate. That he is terribly frightened is, however, manifest upon the face of the lawyer’s letter. Depend upon it, madam,” said I, directly addressing Mrs. Norton, “that Mr. James Ryder is shuffling the cards for such another devil’s game as he played at Three Bridges, and for probably a much higher prize—I can only mean the pecuniary portion of the prize, of course—and dreads that a just cause and impediment will baffle him of his prey. This is the only interpretation I can put upon the proposition he has made.”

“I agree with you,” said Mrs. Norton; “and I place the affair in your hands, to act as you deem

best, with entire confidence. What say you, Emily?"

The betrayed and, I could not doubt, still loving young wife acquiesced with a sigh; and I left, to enter upon the campaign with cheerful confidence.

At first I thought of acting in concert with an attorney; but, upon riper reflection, I determined not to do so. I have no trust in divided counsels. Besides, I knew where to occasionally drop upon a knowing clerk in Messrs. Barstowe's office. I should find the ends of the knot if there were one to untie.

I saw Mr. Barstowe, senior; there was no reserve or dissimulation in the conversation of that highly respectable gentleman. He was quite as frank as his duty permitted him to be. I was shown the document Mrs. Norton would be required to sign before she could receive the two thousand pounds. Supposing the attorney's client, Mr. James Ryder, had correctly stated the case, instead of falsifying it, there was nothing Mrs. Norton could have reasonably objected to sign.

“Mr. James Ryder instructed you personally, I presume?” said I.

“You wrongly presume. I have never seen Mr. James Ryder, who, as our letter states, has left for Spain. We are instructed by Sir James Ryder, Baronet—Mr. James Ryder’s cousin. The Baronet is much interested for the cousin; they were, I believe, schoolfellows together. Sir James”—added Mr. Barstowe, who seemed to be in an unusually garrulous mood—“Sir James has only lately, and unexpectedly, succeeded to the title and estate. It was necessary that three or four lives, each as good as his own in the estimation of an actuary, should lapse, and without lawful issue, too, before his turn came. The estate attached to the baronetcy,” added Mr. Barstowe, “is not so very large—not more at the utmost than three thousand a year. But Fortune’s favours, like her frowns, seldom come single. He is about to marry a very wealthy widow. But for that, Sir James would hardly, I think, have bound himself, as he has done, to furnish the four thousand pounds to be returned to Mrs. Norton; and

have guaranteed the one hundred and fifty pounds life annuity to Emily Chantrey Norton. There are not many such generous cousins in the world."

"Very few indeed. *I* never met with one. Does the baronet at all resemble his cousin, Mr. James Ryder, whose portrait this is?" said I, suddenly.

Mr. Barstowe looked keenly at the portrait for two or three minutes, and then said—"Yes, there is a remarkable likeness—a family likeness—a very striking family likeness between those features and those of Sir James Ryder. Only the baronet's hair, whiskers, moustache are jet black, and these are a lightish brown."

"Have you, may I ask, long known Sir James Ryder?"

"Personally, about ten days only. He was introduced to us by a very old, a much respected client. Would Mrs. Norton wish, for any reason—a woman's reason, if she has no better one—to see the baronet? You seem to be edging in that direction. I do not suppose Sir James would have

the slightest objection ; but the interview would, I am pretty sure, be fruitless."

" Mrs. Norton may have her own opinion, an erroneous one possibly, as to that ; but I am quite sure she would be glad to see Sir James. She might wish her daughter to stand better in the baronet's opinion than the version of the marriage given by his cousin may have placed her."

" Be it so. I will write to Sir James this evening, requesting him to state if he has any objection to see Mrs. Norton, who, I suppose, would be accompanied by yourself—partly as *amicus curiæ*—partly as a detective officer. I am sure there can be no objection. If you will call the day after to-morrow, early, I will show you the baronet's answer."

I also wrote, by the same post, to report progress—immense progress, in my estimation—to Mrs. Norton ; and requesting her to be in readiness to come to London at the briefest notice. Not that I believed Sir James Ryder would see Mrs. Norton. My conviction was formed unalterably. Sir James was James Ryder *alias* Augustus Tem-

ple,—who was about to espouse a rich widow,—would then sell the estate he had to his great surprise inherited,—and, with the proceeds thereof, and the widow and her 'wealth, betake himself' in reality to Spain, or other continental refuge from the pains and penalties of British law. Fire would not have burned that conviction out of me.

Judge then of my surprise when, upon keeping my appointment at Furnival's Inn, Mr. Barstowe informed me that Sir James Ryder would be happy to see Mrs. Norton and myself, at any time suitable to the lady's convenience, so that it might be within four days, at his temporary residence, Hampstead. Any explanation he could give would be cheerfully rendered; but the terms—*money* terms—proposed could not be varied.

This was really a poser. The giants I was about to slay were of my own creation. That rascally Ryder *alias* Temple, who robbed his wife of four thousand pounds, and stole the child from Arundel, was solely prompted by conscience and a desire to do right, as far as pecuniary compensation, to the utmost stretch of his ability, could repair a cruel

wrong. Strange, passing strange, if true. I should wait, without finally deciding, till the last scene of the play was played out.

The day and hour for the interview were appointed; but, before accompanying Mrs. Norton to Maida Lodge, I thought it as well to seek out Edward Colville, Mr. Barstowe's knowing clerk. He was a decent sort of chap, as far as I knew,—keen as the north wind, but bibulous, which, of course, diminished his chance of reaching the top of his profession.

“If that ain't Sir James Ryder,” said he, “the cousinly-likeness must be wonderfully strong, as the governor remarked to you, in the Ryder family. Old Barstowe is going with you, is he, eh? I should like to know the upshot,” he added, after a thoughtful pause, and returning me the portrait. “I can make an excuse for leaving the office, and, after leaving Sir James, you and the lady will find me at the ‘Star and Garter,’ not above two hundred yards from Maida Lodge; but, of course, *you* know the house. I should like to have a hand in this game. It strikes me that I shall, about

noon to-morrow, hear of something to my advantage."

Mr. Barstowe, Mrs. Norton, and myself left Furnival's Inn, in a cab, at about eleven.

"Sir James," said the solicitor, "will speak with you two alone. In the first place, at all events, he will confer privately with me: he wishes, no doubt, to ask some legal questions. After your interview is over, I shall see him again, formulize whatever modification of the proposed arrangement may have been agreed to, and then, I hope, the matter will terminate."

Nothing could, it seemed, be fairer; and I felt a growing conviction that Mrs. Norton and her daughter could not do a more worldly-wise thing than close at once with the baronet, upon the best terms that could be wrung from him.

Arrived at Maida Lodge, we were ushered into a handsomely-furnished drawing-room; and presently Mr. Barstowe was requested to speak with Sir James in the library. The lawyer was not gone more than ten minutes. "Sir James will see

you at once. Let me show you the door. I am afraid," he added, "that you will not have gained anything, madam, by insisting upon this interview. There is, moreover, pressing need of dispatch. The baronet is to be married the day after to-morrow, and will leave England for two or three years, perhaps longer, immediately."

Mr. Barstowe tapped at the library door, and the baronet replied, "Come in." "The interview is to be private, as I told you," said the lawyer, retiring; "but I shall see you all three presently."

A tall, slender gentleman was sitting at a large centre table covered with papers and books, and with his back towards us, reading a newspaper. He rose with some deliberation, turned round, and a half-glance convinced me that Sir James was not *our* James Ryder. I was much abashed, and flushed hot as fire. Mrs. Norton was equally daunted, as one may say; and I have no doubt that her estimate of my detective capacity fell instantly to zero.

The baronet bowed coldly to Mrs. Norton, and

requested her to be seated ; of my presence he appeared to be entirely unconscious.

Mrs. Norton was at a loss to begin. Sir James helped her out.

“I was desirous, madam, of seeing you without the presence of lawyers. I am quite aware of *all* the circumstances attending the unhappy acquaintance with your family at Three Bridges ; but, though I am very sensible of my impulsive cousin’s faults—vices, if you will—one does not wish them to be blazoned to the world more than is necessary. With respect to other matters, I consent that the life-annuity to Miss Norton——”

“I beg your pardon, Sir James Ryder,” interrupted the mother, with kindling heat ; “there is no Miss Norton. My daughter is your cousin’s lawful wife.”

“I have no wish, madam, to say anything that may hurt your feelings. At all events, if he was her husband, James Norton is dead to her for ever. He has settled—will, no question, marry—in Spain, and must take the consequences. I think, madam,” added the baronet, “there is nothing more to say.

Mr. Barstowe will take your final decision. The deed has, you are aware, been already executed by me. A supplementary document I will also subscribe, making the annuity two hundred pounds per annum. That, madam, is my last word."

Mr. Barstowe agreed to have the necessary deeds ready (and the two thousand pounds) on the morrow, at his office; and I, with Mrs. Norton, both very sulky and very sour, took our way to the Star and Garter. Edward Colville was awaiting us. He listened with glittering eyes to our account of the interview, and smiled radiantly when I indignantly asked him how he could have had the folly or stupidity to say there was a strong family likeness between the hook-nose baronet and the features of the portrait I had shown him.

"Hook-nose, eh!—swarthy complexion! A tall, lathy-like fellow, that has been run up in a hurry! I don't suppose your Sir James nor the other James knows anything about the portrait; or, at all events, have forgotten that such a thing exists. Well!" added the knowing clerk, with one of his

most comprehensive winks, "it will be all on the square presently, never fear. I see a little cherub that sees their little game. We must go back to Maida Lodge; not yet, however—not till the shades of evening fall around us; old Barstowe may not be gone else, and my back-play requires his absence. Never fear that the baronet will be gone out. He has not till quite dark lately, and then always in a close carriage, to visit the rich widow in St. John's-wood—of course, the rich widow whom the honourable baronet is to lead to the hymeneal altar the day after to-morrow! Ho, ho! We have plenty of time to crack a bottle of wine. Of course," added he, addressing Mrs. Norton, "I look for reward—money reward—in proportion to the service I shall render you and your daughter. That will do, madam: I can tell whose word I can take in preference to thousands of other people's bonds."

"I have the *entrée* of Maida Lodge," said Colville, "especially when—as now—I carry a roll of law-papers. I knock; directly the door is opened,

you follow me smartly in. Sir James Ryder is, I know, in the library ; he is waiting there for me."

"Sir James Ryder," said Colville, addressing a gentleman standing with his face to the fire, "I have brought the papers from Mr. Barstowe's office——"

He was interrupted by a loud, hysterical scream from Mrs. Norton, with which mingled a terrible malediction from the suddenly ashen lips of the baronet. *Our* James Ryder this time, and no mistake, spite of his dyed hair and whiskers. I saw it all at a glance.

"Augustus Temple otherwise James Ryder, my daughter's husband!" exclaimed Mrs. Norton. "That is he!"

"Which *he*," said Colville, "is, *I* assure *you*, the real Simon Pure ; the genuine Sir James. The other fellow's name is Turnley. I dare say he is to be found, if you want him, by stepping through the door opposite, into the next room."

The baronet glared like a tiger at bay ; and, with an impulse of insanity, made as if to bolt out of the room and escape. "No, you don't, Sir

James," said I, seizing him. "None of that nonsense, if you please."

Ten minutes, more or less, of bewilderment, silent consternation, passed, and then we all began to realize the situation.

Colville was the first to speak.

"It is decidedly a case for transaction—compensation. Hubbub, exposure will injure all parties. Suppose we send for Mr. Barstowe."

The proposition was sullenly agreed to by the baronet; and before ten o'clock everything was settled. Sir James acknowledged Emily Chantrey Norton to be his lawful wife; and by formal deed, signed *pari passu*, with a deed of separation, settled upon Lady Ryder an annuity of eight hundred per annum. The four thousand pounds were also to be returned. As to the boy Augustus, the mother might have him, and welcome. He had been stolen, as a private speculation, by Summers himself—as a means of putting the screw on at pleasure, should Mr. James Ryder, lately Sir James Ryder, be not sufficiently liberal with his cash. He

passed as the nephew of Mr. and Mrs. Summers, and had been placed as a boarder at the High School, Everton, near Liverpool. Mr. and Mrs. Summers themselves kept a large tavern in the great maritime metropolis of the North of England.

A few days afterwards, Sir James Ryder left the country, and, I suppose, sojourns permanently on the continent.

It was further stipulated, I had almost forgotten to state, and secured by deed of entail, that the boy (son) should at his father's death succeed to the estate, as of course he would to the baronetage.

THE MURDER OF ANTONY LOUVEL, 1794.

I MET an old acquaintance of mine, whom I had lost sight of for many years, in the High-street, Camden-town, one spring Sunday evening; but so changed in all respects, that I had some difficulty to persuade myself that it could be really Jack Pendrell who was so heartily shaking hands with and declaring he was so delighted to see me. When I knew Pendrell, he was a pale, moonish, spouting youth—imbued with a strongly-expressed preference for perishing in the flood rather than rot upon the bank; and especially desirous to achieve the tinsel triumphs of the actor. Having, however, stumbled hopelessly in his first amateur step on the stage, he was forced by inexorable destiny to subside into a country grocer's apprentice. "My life," I remembered him to have exclaimed, just as he was about to scale the roof of the Reading

coach—"My life, Clarke, is blighted for ever. But, thank God, the struggle can't last long. I *feel* that. The sword will soon cut through the scabbard."

And now, good heavens! this Byronic young gentleman was the stout, podgy father of seven children in actual presence, with more possibly at home. One, the youngest, he sustained on his left arm; two, seated in a smart child's-carriage, he tugged along by the long handle with his right; the remaining four, with their mamma—a sharp, sloe-eyed, little woman—continuing and concluding the procession! The weather was warm; and the once for ever blighted being—though perspiring profusely, and somewhat blown with his work—appeared to be in excellent health.

"Maria, love," said Pendrell, with a deprecatory, timid smile, addressing his by much better half,—
 "Maria, love, Mr. Clarke, the famous detective-officer we read of in the newspapers, and a very old friend of mine."

"Maria, love"—who at first evidently resented the halt which I had caused—relaxed immediately that

the words "detective-officer" struck her ear, and said she was glad to make the acquaintance of any of her husband's friends. To such a pitch did she carry this graciousness, that upon reaching the side-door of the house, upon the front of which shone the words "John Pendrell, Grocer and General Purveyor," in all the glory of giant gilt letters, and I excused myself from accepting her invitation—"Pray come in, Mr. Clarke,"—she positively acceded to her husband's wish to be allowed to go and smoke a pipe with his old acquaintance, merely restricting his tether to the extent of one hour.

I afterwards knew that the reason why I had found such immediate favour in the lady's eyes was that, having lost five silver table-spoons when confined with the baby actually in arms, about twelve months previously, it suddenly occurred to her, upon hearing my name and vocation mentioned, that I might be able to find out whether it was the servant-of-all-work for the time being or the monthly nurse who stole them—a query which greatly disturbed her peace of mind, forasmuch that the services of the monthly nurse would be

again required before many days had passed. I may here remark that I was not fortunate enough to solve the mystery of the spoons, and that the monthly nurse resumed her functions in due time.

We proceeded to a respectable tavern in the neighbourhood ; and materials having been set before us, our pipes lit, I said :—" Matrimony agrees with you, Pendrell. You are twice the man, in circumference at all events, that you were when I last saw you ! And I conclude, from what I saw just now, that your brain is swept clear of all romantic rubbish."

"Yes, Clarke ; yes. Matrimony appears to be the natural state of life to which it pleases God, for wise purposes (we are bound to believe *His* ways to be inscrutable and past finding out), to call us. Most of us come to it in time, or it comes to us—which is much the same thing. And, depend upon it, there is nothing knocks the nonsense out of a man like a wife and seven small children ! nothing. Your health ; and happy to see you once more."

We smoked for some minutes in silence—he, I could not fail to see, with an introspective doubtful

glance at a disagreeable thought which had suddenly arisen in his mind. "My fat friend's affairs, I should be afraid, are embarrassed," said I to myself, "were it not that he is pretty nearly two yards in girth."

"I have been several times," he presently said, "about to hunt you up, and consult you upon a matter which lies in your professional way of life; but Mrs. Pendrell being an eccentric person—she is *very* eccentric, Clarke,—won't keep a pony-chaise for the children, though we can well afford it—and I did not know how she might take a call from you. Now, however, that she has herself invited you to take a cup of tea now and then, and a hand at whist—Maria plays whist herself—first, to keep in with the old, diabolical villain, who——. Here, waiter; the same as before. It makes me hot to think about it."

"Who is the diabolical old villain you are speaking of?"

"The name of the diabolical old villain is Manzel; Theophile, or Theophilus Manzel; his place of birth, somewhere in France; his means of life,

cribbed from mine, and be d—d to him ; and he has, in my private opinion, two or three murders, at least, upon his thundering old head.”

“Two or three murders ! What nonsense are you talking about ?”

“No nonsense at all. I perhaps exaggerate the *number* of Manzel’s crimes ; but if he has not human blood upon his spotted soul, blood long since shed, but which will *not* sink into the earth, and still cries to Heaven for vengeance, I am a besotted idiot. In fact, Clarke, there is a skeleton in our house—as they say there is in most others—which I should be glad to see laid in the Red Sea, or, a more effective riddance, swinging from a gibbet. Come, I am going to open my mind to you,” he added, with kind of acrid seriousness ; “it is time I should to some one. Let us go into the next room ; we can there talk without danger of being overheard. I’ll not be stifled with this dreadful mystery any longer, whatever be the consequence.”

The change of manner, of aspect, in Pendrell surprised me a good deal. He had become all at once a serious, self-respecting man of business

and the world. I should have known, without reasoning upon it, for I had seen hundreds of such instances, that a man may be a very tame snake to his wife, and a confoundedly bristly person for others to meddle with. Such men love home-peace, and will submit almost to anything for a quiet life; a fact which their loving spouses are very quick to discover, and to tune their tongues accordingly.

“I shall be unreserved with you, Clarke—(I did not much like his “Clarking” me in such bump-tious, patronising fashion, but I let that quietly pass)—I shall be unreserved with you, Clarke, really believing as I do that serious—nay, solemn—eventualities are involved. To begin with, I have an inveterate dislike of Theophilus Manzel,—a bitter, gnawing dislike. No man loves, esteems his wife in a mild, been-married-ten-years sort of way, more than I do mine. She is an excellent partner. It is likely enough that had I not married her I should have gone through the bankruptcy court twice at least before now. Maria is also a very judicious mother, and I love our children. Of course, she has her ways and whims; but if two

ride one horse, both can't ride in front, and better for the man to let his wife hold the bridle than to be always fighting and scratching for it. That, at least, is my opinion, and I suppose that of all sensible men. Well, Clarke, it's just because I should never have married Maria but for Manzel that I hate the fellow. At least, that was the original cause of my hatred."

"I have no skill for the interpretation of riddles."

"There will be no skill required when you hear how the marriage was brought about. A man may relish a delicate, substantial dinner, but would not particularly like being kicked along Cheapside into the London Tavern to partake of it."

"That would certainly be an objectionable grace before meat."

"Decidedly so. This, then, was how that ceremonial catastrophe was brought about. You know very well that when I started for Reading I was 'a blighted being.' Thanks to a pretty free use of brandy-and-water and cigars, I revived sooner than could have been expected. I scrambled

through my apprenticeship pretty well, and returned to London in high feather just one week before my father's name appeared in the *Gazette*. My mother had been dead between two and three years. Her husband followed before the formalities of bankruptcy were completed, and I was left to my own resources. Ample resources truly. About five pounds in cash, two suits of clothes—both the worse for wear—and not the slightest love of work ; not, at all events, for its own sake. It was necessary, however, to seek it out ; so I left Chelsea to take lodgings in business London. Chancing to stroll along John-street, Fitzroy-square, I met my destiny at No. 6, in one of the windows of which rather dingy domicile a paper informed passers-by that ‘A room was to be let within for a single man.’ I knocked ; the door was opened by Maria Kent, now and for over ten years past Mrs. Pendrell. Terms, three shillings per week for the parlour next the sky, with a turn-up bedstead in it. I agreed, and slept at No. 6 that same night. The house was tolerably well-furnished, and let out in lodgings by M. Manzel and his wife—the wife being Maria

Kent's mother. I rather took a fancy to Maria—nothing at all serious, but a fancy ; liked to play a game of cribbage with her of an evening after I came home tired, dispirited with vainly seeking for employment. The grim ogress—Madam Manzel, as she called herself,—frowned severely at our little familiarities ; and as I felt a perfect horror of the stepfather (one of the most gaunt, ghostlike spectres that ever in the flesh—more correctly, sharp bones, tightly covered with cadaverous-coloured parchment—haunted a human habitation), scarcely less for his wife, and though I felt no very great interest in Maria, I more than once half resolved upon giving notice to quit. I did not, however ; and, by-and-bye, my five pounds being expended, or close upon it, with an arrear of a fortnight's rent upon my fainting shoulders, I could not do so. My trunk, a large, well-filled one, all reckoned, would have been kept back ; and there were many things therein which I gloomily foresaw would soon be in charge of one of the gentlemen who flourish under the shadow of three golden balls. Another week passed, I was still more deeply in debt, and

things looked very black indeed, when the sky changed in a most sudden, surprising manner. You must know that Manzel had then, as he has now, a sort of occult reputation for being a man of hoarded substance ; who, if so minded, could shell out no end of money. I believed it then doubtfully, I have no doubt now but it's devil's wealth. Enough of that, I must put on the steam, or I shall never bring this business to a wind-up. 'Mr. Pendrell,' said Maria,—when I returned home, after a more than usually wearisome day of disappointment—and she looking fresh as a rose, merry as a lark, 'Mr. Pendrell, mamma has given me something for you.' 'The rent-bill,' groaned I. 'Oh no ; nothing of the sort : two tickets for the Princess's theatre ; and we might, if you like,—but I suppose you won't,—go together.' I wonder my hair, limp as it must have been with perspiration and the hot weather, didn't stand on end. 'Come,' added Maria, 'get ready at once. I can pay for the cab—there and home !' That was the beginning of it ; the end was, that we were married by licence at St. John's Church—old Grim-

Grubber forking out the expenses with the liberality of a prince. We were to live at No. 6 till Manzel could find an eligible opportunity to set me up in business, in the grocery line. There was a first-rate wedding-breakfast; after which we set off for Margate, on our wedding trip. A very pleasant wedding trip it was. Only if I had known—but, as the copybook says, if ignorance is bliss, it is wise to let well alone. Before I go on, I beg most emphatically to state that I am quite sure Maria—my wife—dealt with me in simple good faith; with complete ingenuousness. At all events, that is my opinion, and I don't want to be argued out of it. The very day after our return," continued Pendrell, "old Death's-head, looking grimmer and ghastlier than ever; and with a goblin-grin upon his face, comes into the room where Maria and I were breakfasting, with a *Times* newspaper in his hand. He took the *Times* daily, and spelt it through and through. 'Here,' said he, 'my children, is a curious advertisement:—"If John Pendrell, son of deceased James Pendrell, of Henry-street, Chelsea, will call or otherwise com-

municate with Messrs. Horniman, of New-square, Lincoln's Inn, he will hear of something greatly to his advantage." 'Gracious goodness! what can that be, I wonder? Come, John!' says Maria, jumping up, 'let's go at once!' 'How did it happen, John'—(I had been John with the old villain and his wizened wife since the evening Maria and went to the Princess's Theatre)—'how did it happen, John,' said Grim-Grubber, with suave serenity of tone, 'that you did not leave or send your address to the house at Chelsea or to the post-office there? Delay in communicating important information to parties interested may be very prejudicial.' If I had spoken the truth, I should have answered that *I* did not wish my relatives to know that I lived in a garret, No. 6, John-street, Fitzroy-square; but I merely said it had not occurred to me to do so. 'Now, John, I am ready,' said Maria. 'You run and fetch a cab directly. I'll copy the address. So away we went. The 'something greatly to my advantage' was two thousand five hundred pounds—left me by a maternal uncle, who had departed this life about a month previously—to be paid

forthwith, free of legacy duty. Two thousand five hundred pounds! Didn't my heart leap to my mouth? It was the Indies! And I won't say that it did not, at the moment, occur to me that I need not have been in such a hurry to enter into the holy estate of matrimony. As soon as Maria and I," continued Pendrell, after a good gulp of brandy-and-water—required, it seemed, to lighten a depressing reflection—"as soon as Maria and I could come down from the clouds, we of course talked little else than as to how the wonderful windfall which had dropped into our mouths was to be invested. I being a fairly-educated person, fond of reading, and having a soul above grocery—more fool I—thought of setting up in the publishing line. This, however, as soon as Maria could comprehend what 'publishing' meant, met with a contemptuous negative. Finally, four freehold houses in Camden Town were purchased for about eleven hundred pounds, and settled, to guard against possible failure in business, upon my wife. With the remainder, the grocery business in the High-street, lease of premises, stock in trade, &c..

were purchased; and a very lucky speculation it has proved. This brings me again to old Manzel. I employed Messrs. Horniman to transact the necessary legal business, with respect to the purchase of the freehold houses, and the settlement of the same upon Maria. In consequence, a clerk of theirs came frequently to No. 6, and upon one occasion saw Manzel, inquired of one of the lodgers who he was, and heard, to his great surprise, that he was Mrs. John Pendrell's stepfather. I was not within at the time, and he called again a few hours afterwards. After business was transacted, the clerk said, 'I don't know whether I ought to mention it, but I have seen old M. Manzel twice before at our office.' 'Indeed!' said I, 'when?' 'About a fortnight—I have been looking at the office diary—about a fortnight before you yourself came to inquire about the advertisement, setting forth that you would, by calling upon Messrs. Horniman, hear of something to your advantage. That was M. Manzel's errand. He had seen the advertisement, thought he *might* be able to find you, and wished to know the particulars. He was informed,

went away, and two days afterwards returned to say he had failed to trace you out—believed, indeed, that he was mistaken in the person.’”

“An impertinent busybody must the clerk have been. Only mischief and heartburning could be the result of such an uncalled-for communication.”

“I don’t care about that! What I did care about—that which enraged me beyond bounds was, that I had been so treacherously dealt with—bamboozled—swindled—taken in and done for—by the hoary miscreant!”

“Still, as your marriage is a very happy one——”

“No matter for that,” savagely snapped Pendrell. “However, what was done could not be undone ; and, as before said, I now, as regards the marriage itself, am quite contented. In fact, it is as much for my family’s sake as my own that I am now taking you into my confidence. From the hour the clerk spoke with me,” continued Pendrell, “I hated Manzel and his wife with the bitterest hatred. My wife—to her great surprise at the time, and unbounded astonishment since—as when

ever Maria is in a bad way (bad way of temper, I mean,) she always brings up—could not prevail to have them come and live with us. Upon that point I was adamant for a time; and when, utterly wearied out, I yielded, Madame Manzel refused to leave John-street. She had taken to her bed a day or two before; which she declared, and truly as it proved, that she should never leave alive. She was bedridden till about fourteen months ago, when she died a frightful death.”

“Killed! murdered by her husband!” I exclaimed, impulsively. “So that is what you have been so long driving at!”

“By no means. I mean morally a frightful death. You shall hear. A message came to our house, importing that Madame Manzel was dying. M. Manzel was out; but the dying woman had been heard to express a wish to see her daughter. As it happened, Maria had not many hours previously been seized with the pains of labour. At her insistence, though I would have been gladly excused, I went to John-street. A terrible scene awaited me. The woman was dying—mad, raving mad; but there

was method and memory in her madness. Her ravings were frightful; and all related to some horrible murder, which it would seem she had witnessed, but could not prevent. The name of Antoine—Monsieur Antoine—frequently occurred. The moment she saw me, she sprang half up in bed, glared like a tigress at bay, and screamed out that it was her daughter, it was Maria, she wanted to see. I explained. That seemed to pacify, to calm her for a few moments. ‘Come to me; come close,’ she exclaimed; ‘but first clear the room; turn everybody out—everybody out!’ There was no one but a nurse present; the doctor, who had been sent for, not having arrived. The woman left the room; and I, at the gesture of her withered hands, stepped to the head of the bed, and bent down to hear what she wished to say, her voice dropping suddenly to a whisper: ‘Tell Maria never to accept—never pollute her soul, perhaps endanger her life, by accepting anything, any jewels, she may find after *his* death! They are dyed in blood—innocent, venerable blood. Hark! Is that his step on the stairs? He will kill me, too, should he know!’

Her flaming eyeballs were fixed upon the chamber-door. It remained closed ; and the footstep which had caught her ear passed upwards. ' Not him,' she gasped. Then turning again to me, she murmured, ' Silence ! not a word, except to Maria ! not a word. But *remember !*' She then sank back on her pillow." Good God ! how it has haunted me ever since ! Maria persists that it was mere delirium. I know better."

" Go on, Mr. Pendrell. Never mind about what Maria thinks. You are beginning to interest me."

" I knew you would be. Well, it must and shall out. I will *not* be poisoned with it any longer. Madame Manzel's eyes closed ; she was falling asleep, or dying perhaps. I would summon the nurse, and leave. As I was doing so with stealthy steps, the deep bell of a neighbouring church tolled, as one may say, rather than struck the hour of one. The dying woman must, I think, have thought she heard the bell which in some Roman Catholic churches announces the elevation of the Host. She started up, screaming, ' Ha ! *It is the 20th of March ! the 20th of March !* You are

having your mummary-mass said for his soul, are you?—for the repose of the soul of him whom you—robber! villain! murderer!—killed in cold blood—in his bed, whilst he slept? But I will denounce you,’ she shouted with demoniac fury, springing out of bed, and seizing *me* with a strangling grasp round the neck—she! a woman bedridden for half-a-dozen years!—‘drag you to justice, to the scaffold! I care not that I am your wife. Hell joined us, if I am. Help, help! Murder, murder!’ I know,” continued Pendrell, wiping his forehead,—the *present* horror, so to speak, of the well-remembered scene bringing out the perspiration in streams,—“that if her outcries had no tbrought the nurse (a powerful woman) back into the room, I should have been strangled, and no mistake about it. I was absolutely black in the face, the nurse declared, when she rescued me. I can well believe it; for I know I was as nearly choked as a man could be and live. Forced back into the bed, and held forcibly down, Madame Manzel expired in convulsions, foaming at the mouth, and uttering terrible denunciations of Theophile and Jules,

which names, with that of Monsieur Antoine, were uttered over and over again."

"This communication of yours, Mr. Pendrell, is a very serious one. Do not forget that it may be my duty to report all you tell me to headquarters."

"To be sure ; it will be your duty to do so. But hear me out. My wife, as I told you, believes that her mother's ravings were mere delirium, not having the slightest basis in fact. Fire would not burn that belief out of her."

"It is not mine, I can assure you, Mr. Pendrell."

"Nor mine. Acting upon that belief, my wife, as soon as she could leave the house, went to John-street, and arranged with Manzel to sell the lease, furniture, &c., at No. 6, John-street, and take up his abode with us. I was obliged to give way; and he still lives with us, if life it can be called. He is like a man pursued by a remorseless demon : starts up in the night, screaming with terror ; and when one or more of us hurry into his room with lights, he is found generally in his shirt ; his face white as stone ; eyes starting from his head ; and

trembling, as with ague, in every limb. In fact, I believe that his mind is giving way—that he is more than half mad already. Another circumstance, Mr. Clarke, must not be forgotten. It was, as I said, on a 20th of March that Madam Manzel died ; and on the 20th of March last, Manzel, for the first and last time since he has lodged with us, went out, dressed in deep mourning. My curiosity was excited, and I followed him to the Sardinian Roman Catholic Chapel ; and there, sure enough, a black mass was being said, and requiem sung, for the repose of the soul, one of the officials told me, of one Antoine Louvel (I took the name down at his dictation), who died on that day, very many years ago, how many he could not say.”

“The incidents you relate have a terrible coherency. Go on, pray.”

Mr. John Pendrell had paused hesitatingly. Recovering himself, he said :—“I read, only about four days ago, that whoever shelters a murderer, knowing him to be such—or does not, in fact, denounce him to the police—is held to be a guilty accessory to the murder after the fact. Is that the law ?”

“Unquestionably it is. Still no one is *bound* to accuse a person of murder upon mere suspicion—though of the strongest kind.”

“But if property—valuables that it could be proved had been obtained by the murder, and had never been previously traced—were found in the possession of the harbourer or harbourers, there would be a presumption of guilty knowledge against him or them?”

“Certainly there would; unless they could show it was honestly, openly come by.”

“So I tell my wife; but she pooh-poohs and laughs at all I say upon the subject. But I have determined to act for myself in this damnable business. Better a year’s tongue-banging than to stand at the bar of a police-court, if only for an hour. Well, then, I shall make a thoroughly clean breast of it. Manzel has told her, and it may be true enough, that he has made his will in our favour—means to hang me with his dead hand, as I have read of somebody doing. (I know he hates me with a deadly hate, for having been present when his wife died—dreads me too.) Manzel has,

I say, told my wife that he has made his will in our favour ; she—a true woman, in more than one respect—couldn't rest till she had found out of what the bequest, so much bragged of in an under sort of way, consisted of. To do so, she in some way obtained the key of Manzel's iron chest—where the treasure must be, if anywhere. He takes his *siesta* on the sofa every day for about two hours, during which he is quite safe. To, however, make assurance doubly sure, Mrs. Pendrell, only on Thursday last—no later than that—locked the sitting-room door on the outside as soon as Manzel was fast ; proceeded to his bedroom, opened the iron chest—you see, I have no reserve—found two large jewel-cases (the keys of which were in the chest), and brought them downstairs, for the leisurely gratification of her own eyes with the glittering treasure which would soon be hers—there being no doubt whatever that Manzel will die before this year's leaves do. Well, it *was* a dazzling sight ; though of the value of the gems—diamonds, rubies, emeralds set in crosses, stomachers, strung in bracelets, necklaces—we

of course, could not accurately judge. Maria was entranced ; and with difficulty prevailed upon herself to return them to the iron chest before Manzel awoke. More than ever is she convinced that her mother's dying ravings were of no more serious account than the chirping of birds—that Manzel himself is a good, generous, though no doubt very eccentric man.

“For my part,” continued Pendrell, “I haven't slept a wink since. At Manzel's death, perhaps not more than a week hence, the will must be proved. Maria, if an angel from heaven were to try and persuade her not to display or dispose of the jewels, would not listen ‘to such nonsense ;’ and we may find ourselves double-ironed in Newgate before we knew where we were.”

“Not quite so bad as that ; but you *might* find yourself in a difficult position. What course of action do you propose ?”

“I leave that to you ; and feel wonderfully relieved at having transferred the whole business to your management.”

“Not quite so fast. There is nothing very defi-

nite, decided, in your statement. The chief points are Madam Manzel's ravings, a short time before death—of no legal value whatever; but affording guidance and light to detective feet and hands. The 'Mass for the Dead,' said on the 20th of March (the day Madam Manzel died), for the repose of the soul of Antoine Louvel—Madam Manzel having spoken frequently during her last moments of a Monsieur Antoine, whom she, in her disordered imagination—we will say disordered imagination—accused of being murdered; at which Mass of Requiem, M. Manzel—leaving your house for the first and last time since he has lodged there—attended. You also find jewels of great value in M. Manzel's iron-chest, which you conclude are the jewels which Madam Manzel said were dyed in innocent, venerable blood; and which she, through you, implored her daughter not to stain her soul, perhaps imperil her life, by the acceptance of. All that is certainly very suggestive; but before acting, more reliable proofs—in a judicial sense—must be obtained. Meanwhile, I should like to see this M. Manzel. I have some skill in

reading the workings of a man's conscience in his face, especially when age and the gnawings of remorse have eaten away the mask which bold-browed, *lusty* villany can often assume."

"I wished you to see him, Mr. Clarke. Will you accompany me home now? It is a good deal past my time," added Pendrell, sinking down at once from the clear-brained man of the world, and resolute grappler with its difficulties, to the timid household serf; "and it may be better—more pleasant—you understand!"

"Very well indeed! Also, that you have not only much overstayed your time, but have been more frank and explicit than you quite intended to be. Not one word, remember, that I am a police-officer!"

"Certainly not! You will manage that—that Maria shall be as little annoyed as possible. To be sure, the hoary villain is no relation of hers, much less of mine. Still ——"

"You have behaved very properly, Pendrell; and I will take care that, so far as you and your wife are concerned, nothing shall be done that may in

the slightest degree compromise you. You half repent, I see, of the bold plunge you have taken ; but, depend upon it, you have taken the wisest course. Have you any further particulars to relate ? Is there, for example, any peculiarity in Manzels mode of thought and speech ? He reads newspapers, I suppose, still ?”

“ Yes, oh yes ! the *Times* every day—the *Despatch* weekly.”

“ He does not, I suppose, much interest himself in politics ; but, if I might hazard a guess, a thrilling murder fascinates, enchains him, and he will be constantly referring to it.”

“ By heaven ! that is exactly true. There is the tragedy of Lord William Russell—supposed to be murdered in his bed by Courvoisier : he has talked of little else ever since, and sometimes says he shall go and hear the trial.”

“ It is very likely that he will—would rather, if he has the chance. The fact that Manzel does dwell so pertinaciously upon narratives of murder, and especially upon that murder, weighs upon my mind as heavily against him as any

of the suspicious circumstances you have related."

Mrs. John Pendrell was very gracious still. I listened with grave attention to her spoon-story—promised to render her all the assistance in my power; and the husband's offence in overstaying his time was, I saw, condoned. I was obliged, however, more than once, when we had an opportunity of speaking unheard by Mrs. Pendrell, to assure him that it should never transpire that he had "informed" against Manzel. I stayed till ten o'clock, in the hope of seeing that person. He did not, however, make his appearance, and I took leave with a very serious affair upon my hands.

A very serious, difficult affair. I hunted through the "Annual Register" to no purpose. Nowhere could I find any account of the murder of Antoine or Antony Louvel. The 20th of March, in the only complete newspaper file I was able to consult just then, was equally blank. The priest at the Sardinian Chapel had merely been informed that one Antoine Louvel had died on the day

named, and been requested to offer up annually a propitious sacrifice for the repose of his soul. At last, however, by what men call accident, I fell upon the track of information; followed it zealously up till I had all the incidents of the terrible tragedy clearly before me. Before decisive action was taken, the information thus picked up, raked together, was carefully collated, and, as the practice is, laid before the legal adviser to the commissioner. The evidence was pronounced insufficient to ensure a conviction—the great, seemingly insuperable difficulty, having regard to the lapse of time since 1794, being to identify Theophilus Manzel with Jules Carlier, Madam Manzel with Maria Denton. I individually had no doubt whatever upon the subject. Madam Manzel in her last ravings had spoken of one *Jules*, and her daughter's name was Maria; but here came a difficulty pointed out by the lawyer, which had unaccountably, most unaccountably, escaped my notice. How the plague could Maria Pendrell, who was certainly not more than thirty-five years of age, be the infant child of Mrs.

Maria Denton, widow when the murder was committed in 1794? The change of name from Denton to King might be easily enough accounted for, like the alteration of Carlier to Manzel; but their age? The solicitor thought Mrs. Pendrell must be the daughter of Madame Manzel by her second husband, Carlier or Manzel. This seemed feasible, and opened up a very disagreeable point in the case,—disagreeable, I mean, for poor Pendrell. He would, should Manzel be convicted, have been the means of sending his wife's own father to the gallows. However, that was no affair of mine. I had a duty to perform which was not to be shirked, were I inclined to shirk it, which I certainly was not.

The difficulty about Mrs. Pendrell's age was quickly solved. Though always, as long as she could remember, calling herself Madam Manzel's daughter—for what reason she knew not—she was really that person's granddaughter. This was proved by the marriage-documents, in which she was described as the daughter of Maria and James King, and granddaughter of Madam Manzel.

Mrs. Pendrell, her husband informed me, had never, to her recollection, seen either of her parents. They had died probably when she was very young. The habit of calling his wife Madam Manzel's daughter had remained with Pendrell after he knew the truth. It was a fact of such trifling importance that he might have half-forgotten it.

I played—at least I began—a rubber of whist, by arrangement of Pendrell, at his house, with Mrs. Pendrell and M. Manzel. Whist was the sole *délassement* of the latter ; and he had, no doubt, once been a first-rate player. But the man was prematurely trembling on the verge of the grave—pushed thereto, I had no manner of doubt, by the goad of a torturing conscience. His faculties were fast fading to childishness, and I had no doubt of success in the game I had resolved to play.

The second game of the rubber was commencing when I said solemnly :—"There are more particulars come out, I hear, respecting the death of Lord William Russell. How strange it is that the evi-

dence of such a crime, if buried, one may say, in the centre of the earth, is sure to come to light at last!" I looked at Mrs. Pendrell, who was Manzel's partner, as I spoke; but saw him distinctly mirrored in the chimney-glass beyond and behind her chair. The moment the words "murder of Lord William Russell" passed my lips, Manzel's trembling fingers ceased sorting his cards; the filmy eyes, kindling with a strange expression of curiosity and terror, were fixed upon me; and when I ceased speaking, the cards fell, scattering, from his hand.

"As a proof of that," I continued, "a number of circumstances connected with a dreadful murder committed many years ago in Hatton Garden——"

"What is the matter?" interrupted Mrs. Pendrell, addressing Manzel, who had risen upon his feet, and, blanched with fear and horror, glared at me. I turned round at the question, and looked steadily at the shaking old man.

"A dreadful murder, committed many years ago, on the night of the 20th of March, 1794!" Manzel dropped helplessly into his chair at these words, continuing to gaze with that wild, terrified expres-

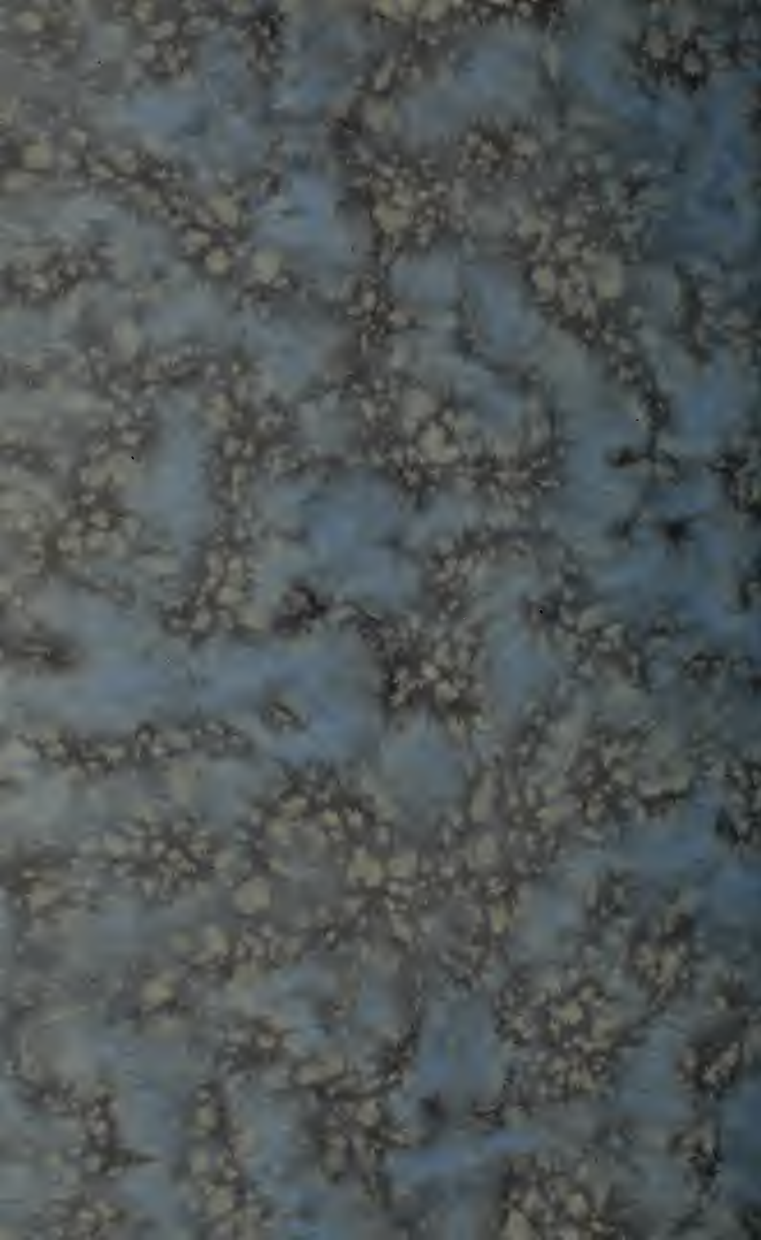
sion in my face. "The name of the murdered gentleman was Antoine Louvel; he was known to be possessed of large property in jewels and coin, with which he had escaped from France. He had two servants; a man and woman. The man's name was Jules Carlier; the woman's, Mrs. Denton. She was a young widow, bore an excellent character, and had one infant child. Carlier was handsome and also young; he had accompanied his master from France. On the night of the 20th of March, or, rather, towards one in the morning of the 21st, there was a great outcry at No. 17, Hatton Garden. A foul murder had been done. The outcry was raised by Carlier, who, alarmed at some noise below (in M. Louvel's bedroom), had hastened downstairs, with a loaded pistol in his hand. He was too late. M. Louvel was weltering in his life-blood, and Mrs. Denton (who had first heard the noise) was weeping and lamenting over the murdered gentleman. The strong-box, in which M. Louvel's valuables were kept, had been broken open, and the contents—estimated at a very great sum—carried off; together with about one thou-

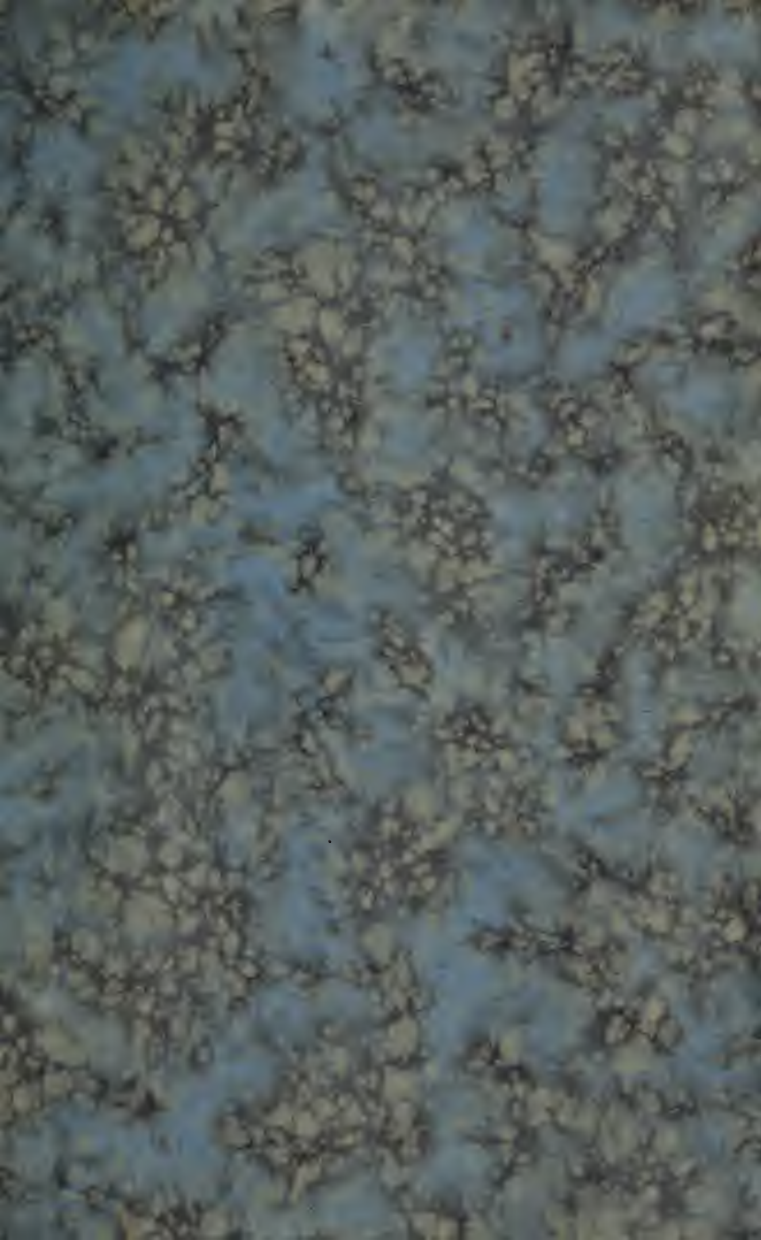
sand pounds—partly in *rouleaux* of French louis, partly in English guineas. This information was furnished by Carlier. The assassin got clear off, and inquiry was baffled. No suspicion—not the slightest—appears to have fallen upon either of the servants, who not long afterwards disappeared from the neighbourhood. It has now transpired,” continued I, rising from my chair, and speaking directly to Manzel—a pitiable spectacle was the horror-stricken, doomed miscreant, he feeling, knowing, he was doomed—“it has now transpired that Mrs. Denton and Carlier had been privately married some weeks previous to the murder; that it was Carlier who murdered his master, whether assisted by his wife is doubtful, more than doubtful. Certainly she was a guilty accessory after the fact. It is now also known, known to me,” I continued, “that Jules Carlier is Theophile Manzel—it’s no use screaming, sir—Mrs. Denton, his dead wife; and I believe that the jewels for which he pawned his soul, and was afraid to dispose of, are now in his possession, possibly in this house; I arrest you, consequently, Jules Carlier, for

the murder of Antoine Louvel." Death was quicker in his arrest of the murderer than I; he slipped down screaming from his chair in a fit, from which he only recovered to live for a sufficient time to make full and ample confession of his crime. His life, he said, had been one ceaseless torture since its occurrence, and that he would have long since given himself up to justice but that admission of his own guilt would bring down exemplary punishment upon his wife.

The jewels, &c., after the legal formalities had been gone through, were given up to the representatives of the Louvel family. Mr. John Pendrell's agency in the matter was never so much as suspected by his wife—a fact upon which that well-meaning, if weak man in a husbandly sense, has never ceased to felicitate himself.









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